No. 1086
8 August –
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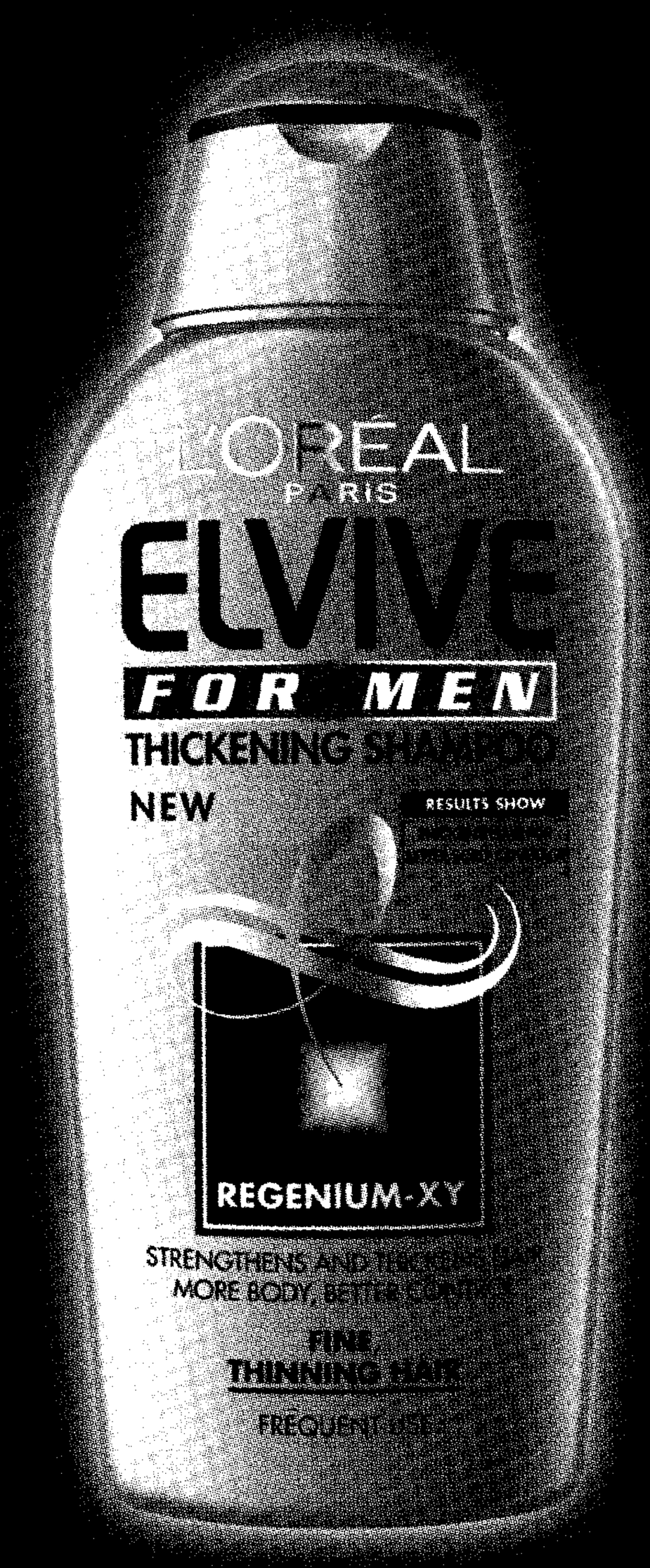

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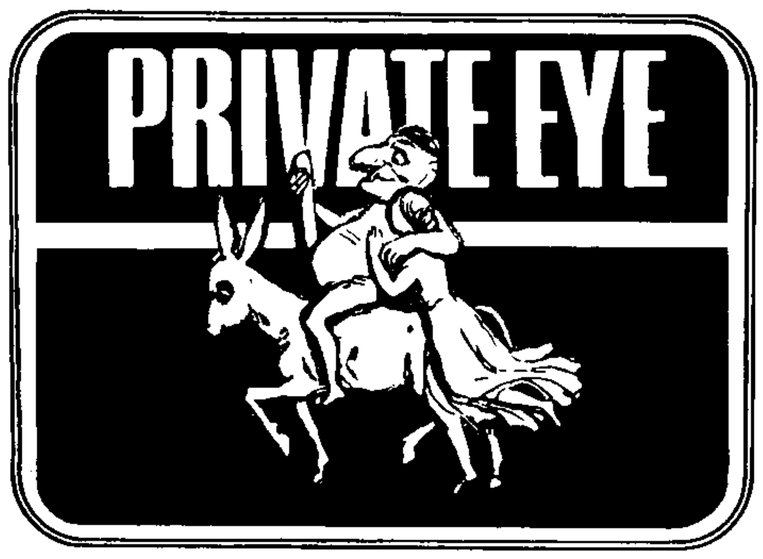

THE propaganda campaign over weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) was closely coordinated between London and Washington. Now a campaign against WMD whistleblowers is also being mirrored on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the UK, Labour's attempt to pin down Dr David Kelly as BBC defence correspondent Andrew Gilligan's source ended tragically. In the US, meanwhile, the administration is also turning on government servants who refused to toe the line.

Former US ambassador Joseph Wilson was sent by the CIA to Niger in February 2002 to find out if Saddam was really importing "yellow cake" uranium. He reported back that the whole story was based on absurd forgeries. Shocked that Tony Blair and George Bush stuck by the Niger claims after his investigation, Wilson went public in July.

Retribution was swift. The conservative US newspaper columnist Bob Novack suddenly announced that Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, was an undercover CIA agent working on weapons of mass destruction, and that she had actually suggested Wilson be sent to Niger. Exposing Plame as a CIA agent certainly damaged her career, and may have put some of her contacts at risk.

Wilson, who refuses to answer any questions about his wife, saw it as "part of a smear campaign, the objective of which is clearly to deter others from stepping forward". Novack was adamant his sources for the story were "two senior administration officials".

In the run up to the war, Blair's communications director Alastair Campbell worked closely with Tucker Eskew, the man who helped Bush win Florida in the 2001 election, on pro-war PR. They now seem to be synchronising a policy of attacking any decent public servant who dared blow the whistle on the WMD lies.

BRADFORD's town hall and around 600 other key council-owned buildings could soon be in the hands of the company at the heart of the Inland Revenue tax avoidance scandal (see *Eyes passim*).

The council has confirmed that Mapeley is part of a UK-based consortium which has expressed a strong interest in bidding to take over buildings that include swimming pools, libraries and parts of the Kirkgate Shopping Centre.

Adverts were placed across Europe earlier this year inviting private partners to bring "professional expertise" to the council's management of its £1bn property portfolio, which currently brings in around £7m a year in rents.

The entire Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise estate is now owned and managed by Mapeley UK Co Ltd, which is based in the tax haven of Bermuda. As regular *Eye* readers know, a treasury select committee investigation of the affair has seen calls for the resignation of revenue bosses.

Not all the Mapeley group's businesses are based on the island, but the Inland Revenue apparently failed to notice the location of the firm involved in its contract until late in the procurement process – part of what one select committee member described as a "catalogue of errors".

"I don't think we can discriminate against them on the grounds of where they are based, in any case," said a Bradford council spokeswoman. The *Eye* pointed her towards the latest Office of Government Commerce procurement guidelines, produced as a result of the Mapeley-Inland Revenue affair – which say a company's tax arrangements would be a valid reason to discriminate – just in case they might be useful.

"WHAT we cannot respect is the hypocrisy of certain broadsheet newspapers," screamed the Voice of the *Mirror*, defending the decision of editor Piers Moron to buy Tony Martin's tale of how he killed a burglar.

But hypocrisy is not confined to the broadsheets.

One newspaper's attitude to the "terrible wrong" that Martin committed when he pulled the trigger has changed remarkably. "He went too far when he took the law into his own hands," it said on 20 April 2000, adding six days later that "it would be a strange principle that allowed an unarmed youngster, whatever he is doing, to be shot without that being a criminal offence".

Two days later it remarked: "To hear the howls of outrage over Tony Martin, you could be forgiven for thinking he is a hero rather than a killer. But he is not. He shot an unarmed 16-year-old boy with an unlicensed gun." The paper added that the boy had been "executed".

Three years later and the view has changed. "Martin did wrong but only because his home was invaded. It was never suggested that he would have become a killer in other circumstances. But he was dealt with as if he had been a cold-blooded murderer."

And which paper changed its tune so dramatically? Why, Moron's *Mirror* of course.

With no immediate announcement about whether John Leslie would sue Ulrika, Matthew Wright or anyone else after the charges against him were dropped, the papers were reduced to speculating about his future on TV. According to the *Express*, which bought up exclusive rights to the presenter's story, first stop was Sky One and "his own one-hour talk show, aired five days a week, starting in October", according to his "spokesman" James Herring.

As always, when a star does an exclusive buy-up with one paper, the others queue up to kick him. But oddly, the worst of the vitriol came from Sky's sister paper the *Sun*. "Tears Today, Gone Tomorrow" was their headline on a front-page claim that Leslie has "NO showbiz future after his reputation was left shredded by a string of sex claims and film of him snorting cocaine". The *Sun* ruled out Granada, Channel 4 and the BBC, only grudgingly admitting "there was one faint glimmer of hope for Leslie – a potential £31million deal with Sky TV". But the paper's opinion column returned to the attack: "Like Michael Barrymore, he will find it an uphill struggle to win a place back on primetime TV."

Usually, the *Sun* needs no excuse to promote Sky in its pages. So why the uncharacteristic lack of enthusiasm? In fact the Sky deal has been on the table since it was first rumoured that Leslie would not be charged back in June, and Herring is merely indulging in a bit of last-minute puffery to see if he can squeeze a few more quid out of the station (which already claims the reported million is "way off the mark"). Rupert Murdoch, in return, wants Leslie on board (imagining public curiosity alone will guarantee ratings), but is determined to pay as little as possible.

Hence the scare tactics spread over five full pages of Friday's *Sun*, complete with a subtle reminder that News International owns video footage of the fallen star snorting cocaine, which has – so far – only appeared in the *News of The World*.

ORDER OF THE NON-BROWN NOSE

"Ms Jowell is a Blairite even when it is going out of fashion. So what about the ultimate 'Westminster-centric' question: will Gordon Brown be the next prime minister? She looks down. 'If, God forbid, Tony was to be run over by a bus…' Ms Jowell thinks again. 'Obviously, if I couldn't throw myself in front of that bus first…' She tries again: 'If at some point, in many years to come, Tony decided to do something else… I assume Gordon would succeed him.'"

— Interview with Tessa Jowell MP, the *Times*.

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"It's the batting order!"

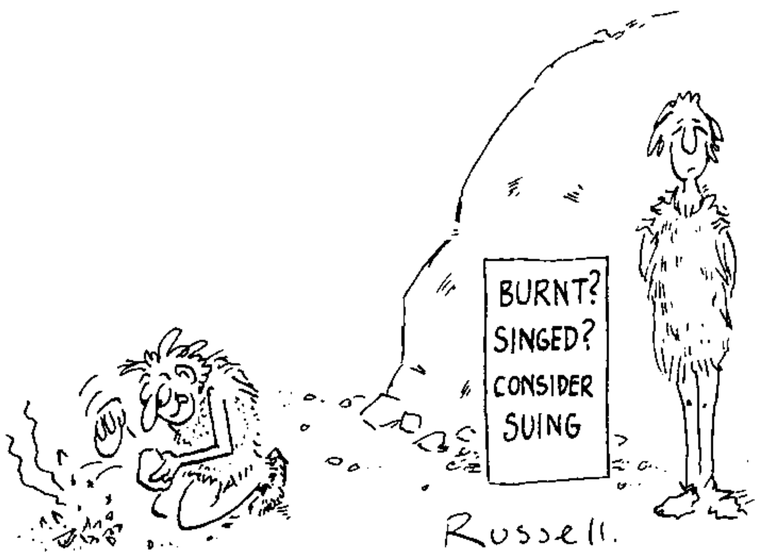
JUST FANCY THAT!

"Minnelli splits with her beau Gest, husband No. 6."

— Page 1 headline, the *Observer*, 27 July.

"Still, if you looked hard enough you could learn just a little about her alleged interviewees, like the fact that Mr and Mrs G really do seem to be in love."

— Review of *Ruby Wax with Liza Minnelli*, page 20, the *Observer*, 27 July.



Lord Gnome is in the South of France

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ABC

Street Of Shame

MOST serious papers in America and Britain have a strict policy of not altering news photographs by computer jiggery-pokery.

Thus it was that on 2 April this year the *Los Angeles Times* sacked its staff photographer Brian Walski, after learning that his photo of a British soldier addressing a crowd of Iraqis – run on the front page two days earlier – was in fact a composite of two pictures, taken a few seconds apart. Walski's doctoring was noticed because he had accidentally included some crowd-members twice. The paper also apologised profusely to readers for deceiving them.

A week later, on 9 April, the London *Evening Standard* ran a front-page photo of Iraqis rejoicing at the arrival of US troops in Baghdad. Like the *L.A. Times* picture, however, it was in fact a composite. Once again it was the incompetence of the doctoring that gave the game away: one man in a turban appeared no fewer than three times in the jubilant crowd.

But here's the difference: no heads rolled. And, it now transpires, the readers don't even get an apology. On 24 July the following brief announcement was buried in the *Standard*: "A number of readers have expressed concern that our front page picture on 9 April, showing Iraqis celebrating the liberation of Baghdad, had been enhanced to depict a larger crowd than actually existed. As it was taken from TV footage, extra people were added to the image to fill the space left by the removal of logos from the picture. In our opinion this did not alter the clarity or truth of the picture's message but we are happy to make this clear."

So that's all right then…

ARE THEY BY ANY CHANCE RELATED?

"As Trevor Kavanagh reports on pages 18 and 19, Britain has become the world's softest touch… A lot of hard-working families think asylum-seekers – many of them bogus – get far better treatment than people who have spent their lives paying taxes." — Editorial in the *Sun*, 24 July, p.8.

"A Commons committee has found that men and women are smuggled from China and ex-Soviet states to work 18 hours a day for less than £80 a week… Some of these people are worked to death in sweatshop conditions… They are often made to work until they drop with fatigue and hunger."
— Trevor Kavanagh, the *Sun*, 24 July, p.19.

New compensation rules for late flights delayed by a year

The Times

IT IS not often Andrew Neill is described as "a titan of journalism". But it takes one to know one; and *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan was happy to bestow the accolade in a large unbylined piece after Brillo Pad praised his paper's buying-up of the Tony Martin story.

Could this towering genius be in any way related to the "prune-faced presenter of a daytime television show" whom the *Mirror* ranked at number 21 in its list of Britain's Least Influential People just two weeks previously?

As the paper noted: "Brillo pad… also hands out advice to newspaper editors, yet his own Sunday Business [*sic*] sells so few it might as well go out of business."

IT'S been a while since hacks at the *Financial Times* were feeling in the pink. Now the paper is plunging into the red.

Profits at Pearson, which owns the *FT*, halved in the first six months of 2003. The flagship newspaper lost £15m, hardly the "great leap forward" promised by editor Andrew "Tubby" Gowers when he took over last year.

All the evidence suggests that Great Helmsman Gowers' recent relaunch has been a flop. And with sales and morale on the slide, tempers are fraying at the top. The author of the *FT*'s popular Martin Lukes column, the fictional emails of a multinational executive, was recently carpeted by Gowers for a minor slip – the non-existent Lukes sent an email to everyone in his imaginary company, A-B Global, instead of just his secretary. Such carelessness, Gowers warned, brings into question "the integrity of the column".

Perhaps the notoriously humourless editor failed to notice that the column is made up. It's an easy mistake to make, since every *FT* journalist can plainly see that life in Pearson is the source for Martin Lukes. Now that the newspaper is run by a secretive politburo of Gowers' cronies, the fictional column is the only way lowly hacks can find out what is going on. It's no surprise, then, that Lukes is dreading a "massacre" of jobs at A-B Global.

FT bosses are also looking for new ways to cut costs. They could sell a stake in *FT Deutschland*, the German sister paper, or scale down plans to conquer the east with a new Asian edition. But both are Gowers' pet projects and therefore untouchable. So hacks are bracing themselves for redundancies.

Luckily, Pearson CEO Dame Marjorie Scardino is on hand with words of comfort. In a memo to staff after last week's disastrous results, caring Marj reminded everyone to "take good care of each other: to listen to each other better; to try to find ways to develop and stimulate each other; and most importantly, to keep our eyes up and open to take a bird's eye view of the world (from the air, soaring) rather than a worm's eye view (from the dirt, digging in)."

There is, of course, no resemblance whatever between Marjorie Scardino and Allen Wagner, the entirely made up American CEO of A-B Global who spouts purple prose and hides mass sackings in the sinister euphemisms of management-speak.

FLAMBOYANT Peter Dyke, the *Daily Star*'s Mr Reality TV, is moving to the *Sunday People* after being tempted by a £15,000 rise on the salary afforded him by Richard "Dirty" Desmond.

But Dyke, who has made his name watching *Big Brother* round the clock and thrilling *Star* readers with daily "exclusives", broke the news to editor Peter "Mentally" Hill on quite the wrong day.

The editor, also known as Blotchy due to his purple-faced toy-throwing rages, was already in a foul mood from endless hours of meetings with his gruesome proprietor. After accusing the hack of losing his marbles, he pulled a picture of a cemetery from his office drawer, pointed at one of the headstones and announced that Dyke's name was on it.

As Mr Reality TV struggled to take in these rants, there was a knock on the editor's door from showbiz editor Ben Todd (known by sub-editors as Badly Written Boy), who had further bad news for the already furious Hill: he had accepted a job on the *Sunday Mirror*.

"Fuck off, then!" Hill screamed, ordering Todd to leave the building that very day and not come back. The editor was later heard wailing: "Somebody get me the night psychiatrist."

A doctor writes: Hill appears to be suffering from a bad case of Desmonditis, brought on by ceaseless pressure from his proprietor to be even more aggressive and competitive. This includes racing back to the Blackfriars office from Luton airport when they return from board meetings in Dublin: while Dirty Des whizzes away in his Ferrari or chauffeur-driven Bentley, Hill is left choking on his dust at the wheel of his company vehicle… a Smart car. The race has been likened to Dick Dastardly taking on Noddy.

ENRAGED by Sir Christopher Bland's boast that the BBC had "the highest journalistic standards probably in the world", the *Sun* carried a leader-page feature on 23 July recalling "five BBC stories he may have forgotten – costing a fortune in libel damages and costs".

The list of "FIVE GREAT BBC BLUNDERS" included a £20,000 libel pay-out to a model who was accused of being a prostitute, and damages of £12,500 and £4,000 to two policeman who were portrayed by *Panorama* as racists.

Great blunders indeed. But not quite as great as the libel settlement that was announced later that very day in the high court, where Kate Adie collected damages and costs totalling £300,000 – plus a grovelling apology – from a newspaper which had falsely accused her of endangering Tony Blair's life by revealing his travel plans.

The paper which had to pay Adie this "fortune" was… the *Sun*.

THE last *Eye*'s account of reviews of Cambridge professor Simon Goldhill's books posted on Amazon.com by Johann Hari, one of Britain's most "creative" young journalists, has caused the prof to abandon his lofty "no comment" stand.

When the *Eye* asked Hari, now a star columnist on the *Independent*, why he had posted reviews in 2000 and 2001 describing the Cambridge classics professor's learned tomes on Aeschylus and Hellenism as "pompous drivvel" [sic] and "the bowels of mediocrity", he told us that while a student at Cambridge he had formed the view that Prof Goldhill was "a complete arsehole" after disagreeing with the professor over dinner about the merits of Mo Mowlam (Hari pro, Goldhill anti).

Now Prof Goldhill tells the *Eye*: "I have never knowingly eaten a meal with Johann Hari, I have certainly never discussed Mo Mowlam with him; there was a disciplinary matter which followed a complaint from the staff about his unpleasantly arrogant rudeness." More reports, please!

Eye 1085 also noted that Hari gets a mention in the first volume of Lord Archole's prison diary as the Great Wordsmith's "young researcher" for his novel *Sons of Fortune*. It transpires that Archole is not the only prominent Tory under whom Hari has toiled. In 2001 he undertook research for flamboyant financier and would-be London mayoral candidate Ivan Massow's novel *The Coppice*. Set in a woodland ruled by, er, sexually confused squirrels, it is an allegory about political life set among badgers, rabbits and weasels, and was intended somehow to explain why Massow deserted the Tories for Labour. A sort of gay *Wind in the Willows*.

Alas, as Hari muses to the *Eye*: "How do you research a tale of lesbian squirrels? The whole concept was preposterous. Ivan has done lots of good things but he's no Booker winner." Sadly, two years on, *The Coppice* has yet to find a publisher.

MOTORING's finest hacks converged on the Ackergill Tower near John O'Groats for 2003's glitziest car launch: the first chance to drive Volkswagen's new £110,000 Bentley.

Bentley's PR team had whittled the invitation list down to seven top names – well, six plus Jeremy Clarkson, who pulled out at the last minute anyway. But these did not include the irascible Ken Gibson, motoring correspondent for the *Sun*. Apparently Bentley had decided that his newspaper was less important than *Autocar* magazine (circulation: 23 teenagers loitering in W.H. Smith).

The *Sun* man rang Sarah Perris, Bentley's worldwide communications director. "The next time I'm with your MD," he snarled, "I'd like you to be there, because I don't want to be two-faced and I am going to tell him how fucking shit you are at your job."

Gibson was, of course, not at all irked that by missing the launch he'd also miss out on the customary bribe (sorry, "gift") to hacks – in this case a £900 Breitling watch. But he clearly needs a new timepiece. Bentley caved in and let him drive the car at Crewe a few days after the Ackergill Tower shindig – yet by Gibson's timing, as smugly reported in the *Sun*, he was "the first journalist to get behind the wheel of the world's fastest four-seater".

IT SEEMS things may not be going entirely to plan in Richard Desmond's legal action against his former chief smutwallah Deric Botham.

Two months ago, following Botham's threat to "sing like a canary" when the case reaches the high court in December, Dirty Des's henchman Martin "The Rottweiler" Ellice decided he must find something to destroy Botham's reputation. Never one of the smartest kids on the block, he hired private detectives to follow Botham at all times.

Alas! News of this decision was immediately relayed to Botham by one of Ellice's own long-suffering staff. Alas again! After spying on Botham's visits to Asda, the cinema, Blockbuster Video and the Passage to India restaurant (plus weekends spent watering the lawn), the gumshoes concluded that the smutwallah did not exist in the constant haze of drug-fuelled sexual debauchery Dirty Des's team may have hoped for. So Ellice apparently decided a rather more robust approach should be taken with the recalcitrant ex-employee.

On 15 July the two parties and their lawyers met to discuss "mediation". Two days later, however, Botham's neighbours reported that two men wearing business suits, trilby hats and sunglasses were taking photographs and drawing plans of his house. The men were described by one witness as "looking like the Blues Brothers and clearly wanting to be seen by as many residents as possible". Already aware that he was being followed, and suspecting a cack-handed attempt at intimidation, Botham immediately called the police.

Inspector Knacker is now investigating. Whatever will Dirty Des's new best friend Tony Blair make of it all?

HACKWATCH

Reality Journalism

IF THERE was one experience worse than actually watching the latest series of *Big Brother*, it was reading the thoughts of the nation's finest scribes as they mused over the comings and goings in the "house".

As ever, the tabloids led the way, and before the show had kicked off nobody was more effusive in his enthusiasm than the *Sun*'s Dominic Mohan, aka Dickhead Moron, aka The World's Worst Columnist.

His column of 15 May announced that the *BB* bandwagon was set to roll and roll. "*Big Brother* 4 will be the biggest yet. Whoever the dirty dozen inmates turn out to be, I predict ratings will be higher than ever. The war is over and there is no major sporting tournament to compete for viewers and column inches. That means hundreds of thousands of intrigued people who have never been hooked before will tune in and catch the *Big Brother* bug. Sure, the first few weeks will be slow and we'll initially lament the days of Helen and Nasty Nick. But as the new characters emerge, we will soon all be gripped.

"From the moment I saw that legendary first series, I knew the cult show would become the talk of Britain's pubs and offices. I was ridiculed in print and called 'obsessed' by publications and individuals who misjudged the public mood. As they sneered, a cultural phenomenon passed them by. Now they're shamelessly trying to play catch-up. The *Sun* was there from Day One and we will once again provide unrivalled coverage. Believe me, the reality TV bubble isn't close to bursting."

After week one, Jeremiahs were already predicting that the show might not live up to the hype this time around, but Dominic had no time for such doom-mongerers: "It's *Big Brother* first week syndrome, when naive critics and worried viewers panic. 'It's dull! It's boring! It'll flop! It won't be as good as last year!' they all cry. *BB*4 has had a slow start, but my message is: Calm down. It's been on six days out of nine weeks and nothing ever happens early on. Let's wait for it to empty out and then things will hot up. What's the Big Panic?"

Two months later, Mohan's delphic utterances had returned to haunt him. Viewing figures were down across the board, with the final evening's audience two million smaller than last year's. Time for a hasty rethink. "The reality is that Reality TV is dead," Mohan declared. "*Big Brother* 4 is the final nail in the coffin of a now-bland telly genre which kept us amused for four years. We've all grown tired of seeing a tedious and average gang battling for their three minutes of fame." Naturally, there was no mention of his earlier attacks on "individuals who misjudged the public mood".

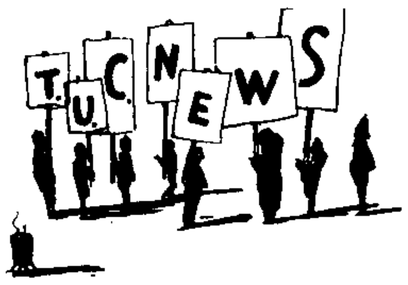
The *Mirror*'s floppy-haired showbiz pundit Kevin O'Sullivan performed an equally spectacular U-turn of his own last year – when, sensing the popular mood shift, he suddenly embraced Jade Goody as a hero of our times after previously describing her as a "Michelin-sized fishwife". But this year he stuck to his guns: from the outset, it was total war on all parties involved.

O'Sullivan was particularly hard on Federico Martone, whom he nicknamed "Fed the Sexist" after Martone called girls who didn't pay their way on dates "slags". Clearly, this couldn't be the same chivalrous Kevin O'Sullivan who called one female contestant a "preposterous pop tart", referred to another as "the repulsive Tampon Girl" and dubbed a former winner "a knicker boiler".

The death of Dr David Kelly left Vanessa Feltz in the *Express* calling for a more generous approach to the show. "We have seen everyone from John Prescott, to Jeffrey Archer, to *Big Brother* contestants… held up to scrutiny and ridicule. We never question whether… they have ever deliberately done anything at all to seek to be the focus of our attention." Leaving aside the bizarre assertion that *Big Brother* contestants and Jeffrey Archer don't deliberately seek out the limelight, might Vanessa perhaps be thinking of her own appearance on the celebrity version of the show in 2001, which was indeed held up to universal ridicule?

The *Eye*'s coveted "Oh yeah?" award goes to the *Daily Star*, which revealed that watching *Big Brother* was good for your health. It quoted "the reality TV show's resident psychotherapist" Brett Kahr: "We spend more time with the *Big Brother* contestants for nine weeks of the year than we do our best friends. It's a one-way relationship but it is satisfying. We feel we really know these people. They are part of our lives… When we vote the housemates off the show it helps us discharge any angry feelings we may have about people. They also help us deal with anxieties about death. We see them go and then we have to deal with the loss that they're no longer there." Not, of course, that Kahr's position in any way compromised him into spouting this rubbish.

The last word, however, goes to the *Sun*'s leader column. "Who would have dreamed," it asked mournfully, "that the favourite would be a virgin 32-year-old fish trader who spends his days reading the Bible?" Who indeed? Certainly not desperate *Sun* executives who had promised £50,000 to the first couple to have sex live on air. What a disappointment! Don't people realise how hard it is to fill a newspaper in the summer?



THE DEPARTURE of the GMB's new supremo, Kevin Curran, from the first meeting at Acas between British Airways management and representatives of disgruntled BA check-in staff was widely interpreted by the media – wrongly – as a gesture of militancy.

In fact neither BA managers nor the press realised that Curran's own members had told their general-secretary to bugger off.

The rebuff came after he tried to intervene in the dispute without consulting the local stewards first and turned up at the Acas offices unannounced. He was promptly reminded by the brothers that he knew FA about BA and that, anyway, it was a London region issue. As one London GMB activist put it: "He sold the shipyard workers down the river in Newcastle; we aren't going to let him do the same to the airport."

THE GMB proudly proclaims that it operates an "ethical investment" policy with its members' pension funds. An investigation by investment watchdog Ethical Consumer and Corporate Watch, therefore, makes interesting reading.

The biggest recipient of GMB members' money last year, with £927,000 invested, was GlaxoSmithKline plc – an enemy of trade unionists across the world. The company led the campaign to ensure that a clause was inserted in the General Agreement on Trade in Services which allows multinational companies to sue national governments if they bring in laws that "hinder free trade" such as, er, better trade union rights.

Coming a close second is Vodafone Group plc, total investment £922,000 by the GMB. Last year Vodafone had no fewer than 60 reports filed against it for supporting oppressive regimes which deny workers their basic rights.

Other notables include Standard Charter plc (GMB investment £155,000), a former supporter of apartheid in South Africa, which last year had 63 reports filed against it worldwide for denying trade union rights. Reed Elsevier, which has a long and dishonourable history of attacking the National Union of Journalists, got £94,000, whilst Rio Tinto, busy destroying the environment (£118,000), and Astra Zeneca, of animal testing fame (£279,000), also benefited from the GMB's ethical investments.

Other beneficiaries of the £15m of GMB members' money invested last year include Morgan Crucible and Slough Estates plc; both of which are major donors to the Conservative party.

'Blackleg'

KEN Livingstone now finds himself in the unusual position of being actively courted by Tony Blair and "New" Labour, who want him to run as Labour's candidate for mayor of London.

This bizarre turn of events – it was Tony Blair and "New" Labour who first re-cast party rules to ensure that he could not win the Labour mayoral nomination and then banished him from the party altogether – comes as party chiefs belatedly realise that Labour risks running a humiliating third in the capital if Leninspart stands as an independent again.

During the last mayoral election, many Labour members backed Livingstone over Frank Dobson and the party's vote also collapsed. Now the plan is to restore Livingstone, whose friendly overtures have been duly noted in Old Queen Street, and hey presto, peace is restored in the London Labour Party, while a rehabilitated Ken toes the line.

As discussions take place behind closed doors between party officials and Leninspart's righthand man, Simon Fletcher, others are not so enamoured of the Dear Leader's cunning plan to buy peace with party activists. For a start Labour already has a mayoral candidate in the shape of Ken's former deputy, Nicky Gavron, and then there are the Cabinet die hards such as Gordon Brown and John Prescott who do not want Leninspart back at any price.

The brooding Chancellor has never forgiven Ken for his fearsome attacks on his economic policy, while others such as John Prescott and Ian McCartney – now Labour's chairman, led the crusade to have Ken booted out in the first place.

And what of Leninspart himself? He has prospered mightily as an "independent". While a return to the fold would bring out the old party faithful, will it bring out the voters?

"WHAT is Compassionate Conservatism?" That is the question that will be posed at a two-day conference organised by the Tory party this September.

According to chairman and organiser Gary Streeter MP, it will be "geared to inspire young people under 30, plus charities and other expert groups working to advance social justice" – a topic he no doubt learned much about three years ago when he represented his party at a gathering of the religious right opposed to the repeal of section 28. Contributions are promised from "a new generation of Conservatives" – party leader Iain Duncan Smith is listed third, after David Willetts and the leader of Kent county council – who are "preparing to tackle the injustices of their times".

Participants can also look forward to a number of expert opinions from figures outside the party who will help them to "increase their understanding of the social problems in today's Britain". The lucky youngsters will get a lecture in compassion from the *Daily Mail's* Melanie Phillips, a talk on "Fighting Poverty at home" from Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, who is paid more to lead the council in Kent than Tony Blair gets to run the whole country, and a "lesson from the frontline" delivered by, er, Graeme Leach, the chief economist at the Institute of Directors.

WHO will draw the short straw and end up leading Plaid Cymru in the Welsh assembly (dubbed Plaid Crumbly after its electoral disaster in May when its representation in the 60-strong body fell from 17 to 12)?

The only spice in the contest between Helen Mary Jones and Ieuan Wyn Jones came when the redoubtable Ms Jones organised a curry evening at her Cardiff home and talked fellow back-stabbers into forcing the resignation of her meek North Walian namesake, following May's electoral disaster.

Celtic feuding lies behind Ieuan Wyn Jones' curious decision to stand for the post he relinquished in a huff only a couple of months ago. A ballot of Plaid's bewildered members has now been called with a third contender, Congregationalist minister Rhodri Glyn Thomas, joining the Jones spat.

A separate ballot is being held for the post of party president, from which the hapless Jones also resigned. Here, the Tweedledum Tweedledee choice is between the lugubrious Cynog Dafis, a one-time MP, and Dafydd Iwan, folk singer and local councillor.

Dr Phil Williams, a physics professor at Aberystwyth University, the candidate favoured by the discerning, is unavailable. Shortly before the list closed he died of a heart attack in "A Touch of Class", a Cardiff massage parlour known locally as "A Touch of Ass".

GRAND SUMMER RECESS COMPETITION

LORD Gnome's search for the most excruciating political website leads him into "the Widdy Web" – aka the online domain of the Rt Hon Ann Widdecombe MP (www.annwiddecombemp.com), charmingly embellished with photos of the great stateswoman meeting Basil Brush on the Gloria Hunniford show and cuddling Pooh Bear.

"I am called a Member of Parliament," she reveals. "We call this MP for short. A Member of Parliament looks after a lot of people." But that's not all they do: "It is also the duty of the Member of Parliament to stay in London and make laws... MPs also have to sit on committees and discuss important issues, such as how well government departments are doing."

But enough of the serious stuff. What Widdy really wants to talk about is cats. Lots of cats. Every cat she's ever met, in fact. "Jimmy was a big black cat. My mother said I used to chase Jimmy, but that I loved him really... The next cat we had was Tibby..." And so the epic saga continues, through Monty and Mitten-the-Kitten, Blacky, Sooty, Sweep, Pugwash, Carruthers...

Suddenly, without warning, Widdecombe breaks into verse. "Goodness gracious, what is that/It's Mr Pugwash, my black cat./Good gracious are there others?/Yes indeed, my cat Carruthers!"

The scariest bit of all, however, is the invitation that greets visitors as soon as they reach the homepage: "Spend an evening with Ann!" Goodness gracious indeed.

"That one!"

JUST FANCY THAT!

"18.30: *Hollyoaks*. Tension mounts between Tony and Mandy."
— TV listing for 25 July, Teletext.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE EU budget commissioner running the European commission's sleaze-ridden statistics department, Eurostat, is now plunging EU taxpayers into even more murky waters by suing the world's third largest tobacco company.

Cynics might see Michaele Schreyer's extravagant money-laundering and smuggling accusations against Japan Tobacco Inc (JTI) as a ploy to divert attention from allegations of massive looting of EU funds by the commission's own statistics department, Eurostat (see last *Eye*).

Curiously Schreyer has chosen to bring the legal action not in Luxembourg, where Eurostat is based, but in the New York eastern district court. Perhaps proximity to Eurostat's head office would look too pot-and-kettle for taste.

While the EU's legal department is keeping quiet about the action, the commission is said to have avoided the cream of New York lawyers in favour of alleged legal bounty hunters from Florida, infamous for claiming massive damages against cigarette companies which were later slashed on appeal.

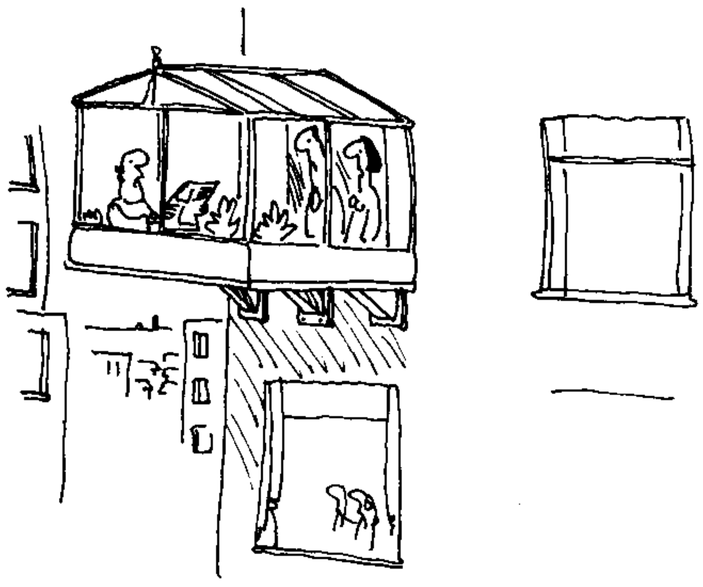
It is also curious the commission should embark on such an action when it previously lost an action against the company's previous owner, the old Reynold Tobacco Company (RJP Nabisco), which it sued for non-payment of excise taxes.

A lawyer from JTI said the company would fight the commission "all the way". It has already helped international police seize millions in counterfeit cigars from Dubai and says it has a team in Geneva investigating the smugglers.

In fact the company claims to be cooperating with governments around the world, unlike the European commission itself which has already sacked whistleblowers Douglas Watt, Martha Andreason and Paul Van Buitenen for their efforts to expose EU crime.

While the commission might hope this court action will help it make up for the millions allegedly siphoned off by Eurostat in fictitious contracts and secret bank accounts, it could well end up costing EU taxpayers millions more in legal fees.

PS: One of the four companies involved in the Eurostat scandal, Pianistat, a French economics and statistics consultancy, is suing the European commission for withholding payments after all contracts with the companies were cancelled. It remains to be seen if the six Eurostat directors removed from their posts and serving in an advisory capacity will be reinstated, unlike the crimebusters themselves who later said they received personal threats instead.



"It's a man from the council about the conservatory"

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

BIOMETRIC identity cards have been touted as the ultimate weapon against terrorism. David Blunkett has voiced his enthusiasm for a new "entitlement" ID card to be carried by every British subject, probably containing biometric data – blood groups, digitized iris scans and the like.

This all sounds very impressive, and with a suitably sinister edge to get the libertarians going. But as some security experts have pointed out, even the most sophisticated biometric card is, ultimately, pointless. For it proves no more than that the holder of the card is the person whose biometric data are on the card. It does not establish identity any more than a forged passport or credit card proves diddly-squat.

The only foolproof way of keeping track of everyone would be to build eye-scanning machines and fingerprint readers into every place where citizens interact with the authorities. Even then, this would only work with people known to the state security apparatus. Terrorists tend to be shadowy characters who, if they are successful, have managed to avoid getting their details plugged into too many databases. A lot of them are also, er, foreign and hence will not be on the UK database.

A hi-tech national ID card scheme won't be the end of freedom as we know it, but it will make life slightly more tiresome for the law-abiding, cost a lot of money and do bugger-all to prevent terror attacks. If he's just worried about catching dodgy Somali minicab drivers and Bosnian fruit pickers, the home secretary need do no more than introduce an old-fashioned cardboard ID scheme that has been used in most European countries for decades. It won't catch everyone, but it will do the job 99 percent of the time and cost a pittance.

THE GRID, son-of-the-internet, is about to come to a screen near you.

The grid has been much hyped as the next-generation net, allowing the world's network of super-computers to combine and share processing power to create a global electronic brain the likes of which we have never imagined. You too will be able to tap into this untold computing power via your humble PC, recent reports have claimed.

Well, sort of. The grid has been much talked of in internet circles for some years now. Some of the claims are undoubtedly true: linking powerful computers in different continents and sharing processing power will be of great usefulness to academics. But don't expect to be able to log on to your nearest supercomputer and use its number crunching powers to make you a fortune on the stock market or play computer games at the speed of light just yet.

For a start, we will need nationwide access to the net at speeds far in excess even of today's broadband. And since Britain seems to be unable to provide even this for most of its population, the grid is going to be a long time coming into your study.

'Boffin'

"He has a texting age of five!"

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE most ruthless cover-up in Britain's farming history seems to be nearing game, set and match to those responsible: that familiar unholy alliance between government officials and the pharmaceutical companies.

Between 1976 and 1992, the old Maffia made it compulsory for farmers to treat their sheep for parasites with highly-toxic organo-phosphorus (OP) pesticides. Chronic damage caused by the cumulative effect of exposure to these chemicals, which attack the immuno-nervous system, was inflicted on thousands of farmers and their families. For many their lives and livelihoods were ruined. Scores and possibly hundreds have subsequently died.

As the government became aware of the disaster it had created, not least through a secret report for the health and safety executive (HSE) in 1991, a top priority of the Maffia and the department of health was to hush it up by ensuring that no minister or official ever publicly admitted that OPs could cause chronic damage.

This was not only because using the chemicals had been made compulsory, but also because each product had been licensed as safe to use by the government's own veterinary medicines directorate (VMD). Any official admission that the chemicals were responsible for the damage done to human health might therefore lead to compensation claims against both the companies and the government itself, potentially amounting to billions of pounds (in one of the few cases where a multinational pharmaceutical company, Ciba-Geigy, was successfully sued for OP damage, in Hong Kong in 1997, the damages were £1.9m).

In 1992, faced by evidence that the mixing of OPs with phenols in the sheep dip was doing irreparable damage, the then minister John Selwyn Gummer ended compulsory dipping, without admitting the real reason. From then on, as university scientists in Newcastle, Edinburgh, Birmingham and elsewhere came up with ever more evidence that OPs were damaging users' nervous systems, the government relied as its main line of defence on its own tame scientific committees.

The Maffia's veterinary products committee (VPC) and the DoH's committee on toxicity of chemicals (COT), many of whose members had close links with pharmaceutical firms, could invariably be relied on to deny that there was any link between OPs and chronic damage; and they were equally careful not to commission any independent research which might confirm the findings of scientists who thought otherwise.

The one niggling weak point in this self-protective structure was the system of "suspect adverse reaction reports" (SARRS), whereby victims of chemical poisoning were entitled to send the VMD an official form recording the details of their exposure and subsequent health damage. Certainly the VMD did everything it could to make these forms hard to fill in and to disregard any damaging evidence they contained. But there was always a faint possibility that sooner or later some outside inquiry or court might want to examine the SARRS forms, with potentially embarrassing results.

A year or two back, therefore, the VPC was asked to recommend how the SARRS system might be "improved". Its chief finding, which has only just come to light, was that in future SARRS forms should be sent, not to the VMD, but only to holders of "market authorisations": ie directly to the pharmaceutical companies themselves. Truly game, set and match.

'Muckspreader'

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

THE PREMATURE departure (three years early) of failed "education provider" WS Atkins from Southwark at the end of July leaves several important issues unresolved.

Not least is the curious case of Gloucester primary school on the infamous North Peckham estate. As *Eye* 1072 reported, the head teacher John Mann and his gorgeous, pouting "personal assistant" Natalia Vedernikova, 22, were suspended last December after it was revealed that Mann had recruited teaching staff from Russia and Bulgaria through Quality Time Introductions Ltd, an agency of which Mann and his wife were directors. According to its website it specialised in "introducing Russian ladies to English professionals".

As a "teacher" Vedernikova won automatic entry to the UK. Despite being paid a teacher's salary, however, she never set foot in a classroom at Gloucester primary, instead being transferred to act as Mann's PA. Alas her WP skills were so poor that a town hall secretary had to be drafted in to handle Mann's correspondence.

Seven months later Mann is on long-term sick leave and the Atkins-led investigation into his conduct is unfinished. The senior management team investigating Gloucester primary has transferred to Southwark's new interim education provider, Cambridge Education Associates. Despite being on sick leave Mann did manage to travel from his Sussex home to Camberwell magistrates court recently to give evidence against a former vice-governor of the school, Jacqui Fergus, who is fighting a ban which prevents her from entering the school's grounds. Fergus says she was barred after she tried to blow the whistle on wrongdoing at Gloucester primary.

Elsewhere in the borough, Galleywall primary school in Bermondsey may have to close and be sold to pay off a £500,000 debt. In April 2001 Atkins's schools intervention officer, Mike Rosen, used his delegated powers to wrest responsibility from the board of governors for all financial, personnel and premises aspects of running the school. Rosen stepped in after parents were informed that the school had a deficit of £58,000 (staff were told it was £175,000). Regardless of the correct figure, after two years of Rosen's rule the debt had risen to half a million.

Much of the money owed is to supply teaching agencies such as Hayes and Protocol, who are each believed to be owed amounts in excess of five figures. A local building firm was given a cheque by the school for £13,000 which bounced after Rosen took over responsibility for Galleywall's financial affairs.

On 16 May this year the head teacher, Tim Barnett, went on long-term sick leave and has subsequently agreed to leave as of 31 August with a cheque for £30,000 in his pocket – the tax-free limit for severance payments under local government rules. On 21 May, Rosen was suspended and Atkins announced the setting up of an investigation into "unexpectedly high expenditure" in certain areas of Galleywall's budget. At the end of June an Ofsted report placed the poorly-performing school in special measures.

Meanwhile Atkins Education, which was charged with running Southwark's education contract, advised several schools to make their caretakers redundant weeks before it pulled out of Southwark… just in time for the parent company to put in a bid to take over the school caretaking and maintenance service!

Number crunchings

£60,000

■ Amount BP was fined for allowing tens of thousands of litres of fuel to leak into Luton's groundwater (close to a drinking water extraction point)

£60,000

■ Amount BP chief executive Lord Brown of Madingley earns every 4.5 days

FTVE

Fame Academy (BBC1)
The Eustace Brothers (BBC1)

A RECENT newspaper article lamented the effects of two- and three-book deals in publishing. If the first volume flopped, everyone from editors to marketing becomes resentful about having to put out the second. For those involved, it's like following a wedding with a funeral.

It's a good point. But how much worse this forced-continuation syndrome is in television. There's an in-built implication in the medium that a second series is a reward for the success of the first; but sometimes a project is so big that execs are forced to agree to a two-fer upfront. Big-name actors' original contracts include pay-or-play options on a follow-up – which is probably why the lame drama *Paradise Heights* has been sneaked back in under the title **The Eustace Brothers** – or an idea has actually been conceived as an annual banker.

The latter applies to **Fame Academy**, the BBC1 school for musical superstardom which last year discovered David Sneddon but hasn't let that put it off having another go. The problem with *Fame Academy* is that it was a shameless copy of ITV1's *Pop Idol* but, though conceived in the heat of creative envy, actually reached the screen at precisely the moment the other show was being branded dull and repetitive – rather as if an impressionist were to perfect his Sir Geoffrey Howe impersonation, say, this summer.

The other problem with the format was that a residual BBC snootiness about such shows encouraged them to add an unnecessary layer of worthiness to the series. *Pop Idol* was – basically – *Opportunity Knocks* with a few more of the ruder panellists from *New Faces* thrown in.

Fame Academy nicked this and then – in a really bad case of the green-eyed monster – crossed it with *Big Brother* as well, arranging for the contestants to live together in a big country house wired with cameras. So far, so cynical. But then, pricked by a historical corporate impulse to do good, they felt they had to turn this talent frat-room scenario into a proper school, with lessons for the contestants.

This vile hybrid duly got a bad press and poor ratings and endured, in Sneddon, a winner who was so outside the usual stereotype of rock-wannabes that he has produced barely a tenth of the newspaper publicity accrued by ITV1's Wills and Gareths.

However, having built such a

Fitting punishments – the Ground Force team

huge eye-sore in the schedules, it's impossible to dismantle it overnight without critics noticing and crowing. And so *Fame Academy* is back. In fact, there was scope for a really good programme in a look-back documentary following Sneddon through the last year, his struggle to make an impact and his ambiguity about the "celebrity lifestyle" (penthouse, limos etc) which were his for a year as a prize. Such a show, though, would have been too negative.

The judges this time are bad cop/good cop married couple Carrie and David Grant, with the dullest of the surviving Bee Gees, Robin Gibb. Each judge has an unshiftable shtick. Gibb tells absolutely every contestant – even the two women who got so nervous last week they sang out of tune – that they have a "great voice" which is "truly international".

This isn't even good cop; it's Dixon of Dock Green. Carrie then tells them all that they are hopeless and don't stand a chance. A talented young soul singer is "dated cruise-ship cabaret". The audience hiss at this stuff, at which point David steps in and offers an exactly middle position: not quite in tune but certainly better than cruise-ship. If the legal system had judges as predictable as this, laywers would be out of business.

Strangely, given that the controller of BBC1 announced last week that *Top Of The Pops* may be for the chop, the studio set for the elimination-heat rounds exactly resembles the mid-Seventies look of that series with the public self-consciously wobbling their bodies to the music while "celebrities" – such as a couple of the England cricket team – look on from gantries. And, improbably managing to add to such naffness, the guests of the contestants wear big bright lollipop badges with legends such as "Nicole's Dad" and "James's Brother".

It could be taken as a post-modernist joke that the presenters of this mess – Patrick Kielty and Cat Deeley – are the two hosts from their generation who would stand least chance of winning any kind of talent contest at all. Trying to learn from the big mummy of this genre, *Big Brother*'s Davina, they operate as social workers, putting their arms around the contestants, hugging them when the judges get rough. But this sympathy would be more convincing if they hadn't just introduced a nasty montage of contestants who failed to get through the auditions weeping as they are told the news.

Nothing works: the early ratings are even worse than last year's. Imagine that the television schedules were a talent show, in which we voted the programmes on and off each night on the basis of whether they impressed us. *Fame Academy* wouldn't get past the first round.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

MATTHEW Wright, the Channel Five presenter who "inadvertently" named John Leslie as Ulrika Jonsson's alleged attacker, faced a sticky problem on his show the day after Leslie was cleared of all charges, and issued dire threats of legal action against those who libelled him.

The first 15 minutes of *The Wright Stuff* are usually devoted to a review of the day's papers. Last Friday guest Alice Beer managed to struggle through the entire thing without a single reference to the topic which dominated every front page. Wright, however, performed his own monologue, pointing out Leslie's innocence no fewer than three times before blaming Jonsson for the entire thing, and announcing "that's all I've got to say on the issue".

The programme then moved on to a phone-in debate on the country's over-reliance on credit cards – or, as the show's caption-writer wryly put it: "Live now, pay later!"

GREG DYKE's mission to "cut the crap" at the BBC is increasingly laughable. It was designed to rid the Beeb of the Birtist legacy of expensive, "out-sourced" consultants and end the regime of pointless suits who diverted licence-payers' money away from programme-making and into pointless bureaucratic experiments. But Birtism has never really gone away.

BBC Training and Development now has a new "Head of People Development", Nigel Paine. He wants to rebrand the department as a "corporate university". This would require 248 staff to run it, including a "Manager of Vision" and a "Just Do It Service Leader", not to mention a whole raft of "Personal Effectiveness Learning Executives".

Of those 248 "executives", only 47 will actually train anybody. They will be drawn from current training staff, who are now having to reapply for jobs they have done expertly for up to 20 years. Some will be made redundant.

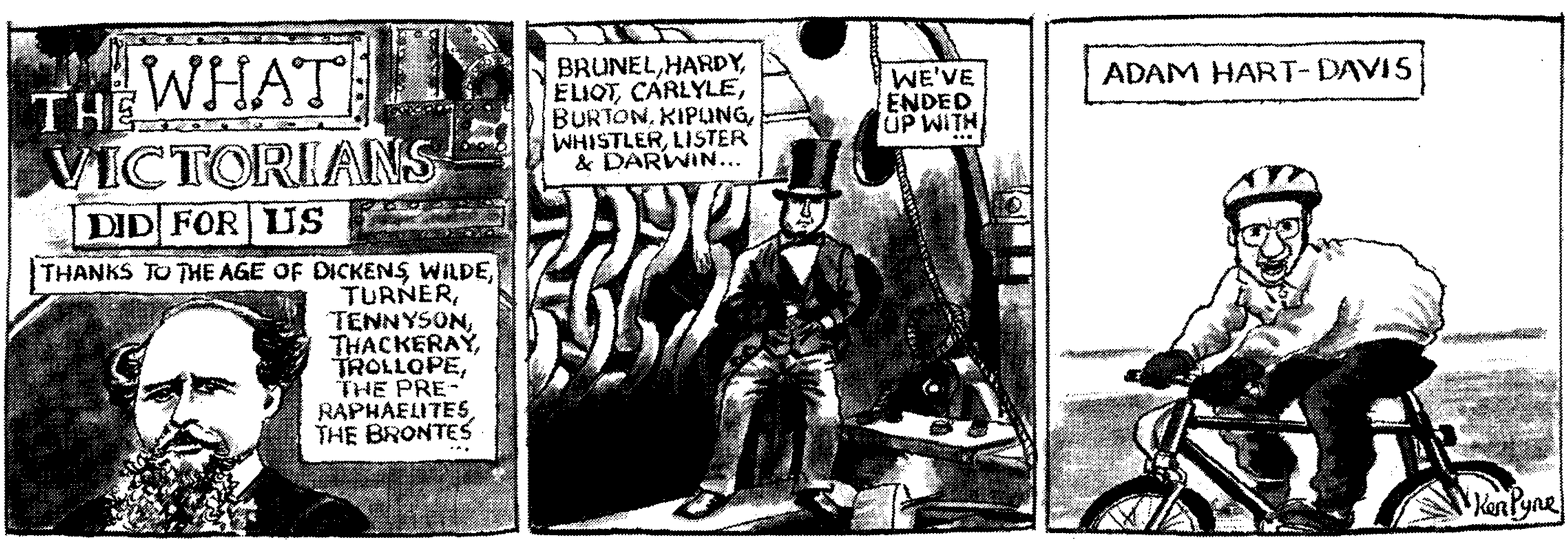
Meanwhile the new management jobs will not be open for interview as they are included in the "jobs not at risk" section of the new department structure.

GOING LIVE

BBC NEWS 24 set the tone when it went live to reporter Andy Tighe at the notorious farmhouse of Tony Martin, following the farmer's release from prison.

"Andy: there's no sign of Tony Martin yet, I take it?"

"No, none at all. He's probably still in London." Repeated all day on all channels.


THE WHAT VICTORIANS DID FOR US
THANKS TO THE AGE OF DICKENS, WILDE, TURNER, TENNYSON, THACKERAY, TROLLOPE, THE PRE-RAPHAELITES, THE BRONTES ...
BRUNEL, HARDY, ELIOT, CARLYLE, BURTON, KIPLING, WHISTLER, LISTER & DARWIN...
WE'VE ENDED UP WITH ...
ADAM HART-DAVIS
Ken Pyne

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: What "R" is the westernmost island of the British Isles?

Contestant: Argyle.

Robinson: Which Lebanese airport has the IATA code "BEY"?

Contestant: Beijing.

Robinson: Vietnam has land borders with Laos and Cambodia and which other country?

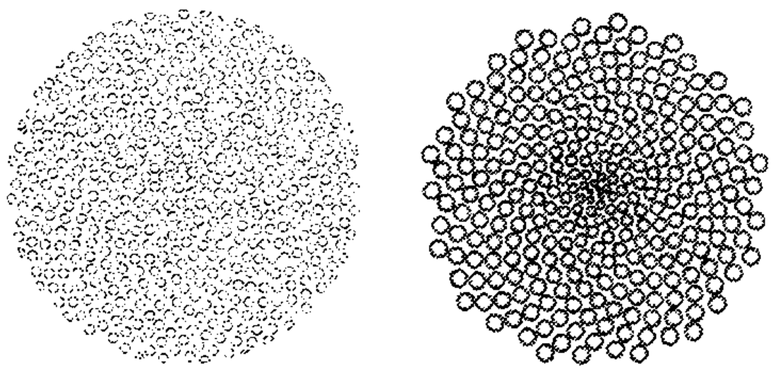
Contestant (*after long pause*): America.

The Vault, ITV

Melanie Sykes: In which city is the world-famous Raffles Hotel?

Contestant: Is it Birmingham?

ART NEWS



Hirst **Not Hirst**

LEAFING through the free pull-out colouring book in the *Guardian* last month, mathematician Robert Dixon was somewhat surprised to see what looked like his own work – with Damien Hirst's signature attached.

The picture should be familiar to many mathematicians as a Fermat spiral of circles at fixed divergence of approximately 137° – based on a formula developed by Dixon and a team of scientists more than 20 years ago. The image was exhibited by the Royal College of Art in 1986, attributed to Dixon, and also featured in his own high-brow "colouring book" *Mathographics*, which is still in print.

Dixon says he has no beef with Hirst, saying: "He's only doing his job as a state modernist, for which contrariness, transgression and avoidance of art are the norm", but he is rather miffed at the *Guardian*, which refused to give credit to Dixon for the picture in its corrections and clarifications column.

THE use of millions of pounds of lottery money to buy Raphael's Madonna of the Pinks for the National Gallery – where it has been on loan – isn't the first time its seller, the Duke of Northumberland (estimated wealth: at least £250m) has played the punter's game with such finesse.

On inheriting the title and the estates after the death of his older childless brother in 1995, the duke was faced with a £5m inheritance tax bill. To meet it he proposed selling his Sherborne Missal, an illustrated medieval religious tome worth around £10m, which was also out on long term loan, this time to the British Library.

Sotheby's valued the book and also brokered the deal whereby the government agreed to waive the £5m tax demand and give the British Library a lottery grant for most of the extra £5m the duke wanted. So the book didn't go abroad – it stayed just where it had been – and the duke was £10m better off.

And now the Raphael can stay just where it's been and the duke will collect another eight-figure jackpot, financed by the poor mugs who dream of winning a rollover but don't quite have the wherewithal to do it as well and consistently as Ralph George Algernon Percy, 12th Duke of Northumberland.

AD NAUSEAM

THE walk-out by British Airways check-in staff at Heathrow has already caused the company no end of grief, but it nearly caused them even more.

A TV campaign that was due to break on 25 July has had to be pulled at the request of senior managers. It's a last-minute about-turn that is likely to cost the company the best part of £300,000 in media fees, on top of the incalculable damage done to its brand by news footage of disgruntled customers and desecrated once-in-a-lifetime getaways.

The reason for the turnaround wasn't simply that BA wanted to stay quiet while its name was mud. The ad that was due to have run was a repeat burst of last November's PJ O'Rourke slot, which had a poke at the low-cost airline industry. Given the Heathrow debacle, the ad would have been pretty galling to BA's stranded passengers – it opens on a crowd in a departure lounge staring forlornly at a departures board full of cancellations and delays. "What we want," drawls PJ, "is airlines with flights, more back-up when things go wrong… a few more staff would be nice." Quite.

"THIRD generation" mobile phones – those that allow you to see the person at the other end of the line, as long as they are one of the other two people in the country that have the right sort of handset – continue to fail to set the world alight, despite supplier Hutchison slashing the price of its '3' phones by nearly half.

One reason might be that customers who have splashed out on the new phones have found they are not nearly as good as the TV adverts pretend. Last month the ITC upheld two separate complaints against Hutchison and banned the offending adverts from the screen.

The first showed people making and receiving video calls without wearing headphones, which the company admitted was only possible "in a quiet room", because volume levels on the phones are so low. The second set of complaints concerned the image quality, which customers complained was nothing like it appeared in the adverts.

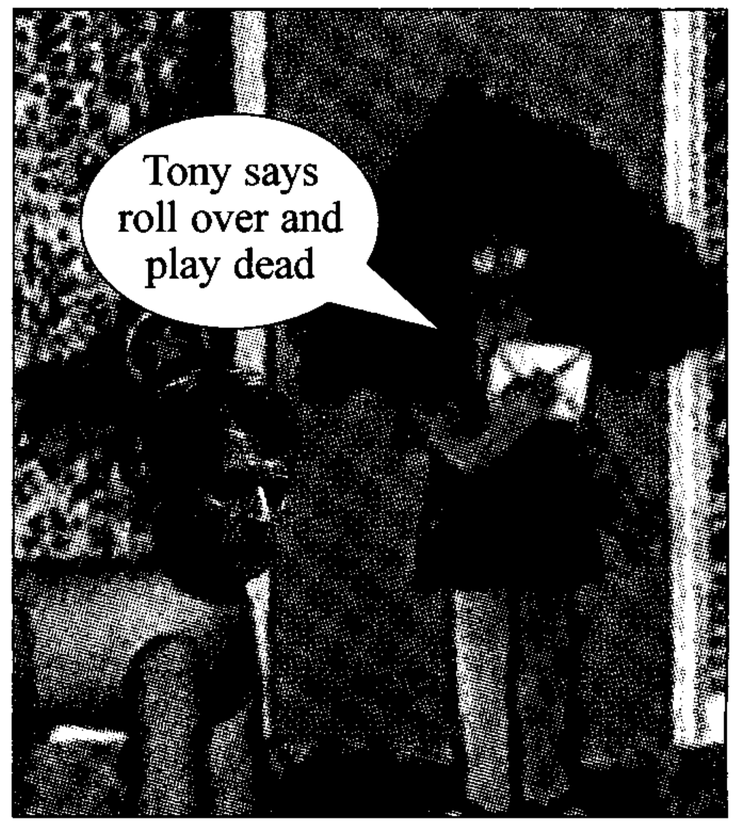
Hutchison happily admitted the TV shots were specially-created dummies, because "a camera shot of the working handset would not give an accurate impression of the picture quality because the picture resolution would be lost in the process of scaling up the image for broadcast on television or cinema screen".

Unfortunately the ITC ruled that Hutchison's own version was just as inaccurate – during real-life video calling "the sound and video image were disjointed, and subject to breaking up. The colour was washed out and low in contrast and picture definition was not as clear as in the commercial."

In its defence the company claimed to have downgraded the images used in the advertising to 15 frames per second, to replicate the way the phone works – except that, as the ITC pointed out, the frame rate for video calling is six frames per second. The company also admitted that picture quality gets even worse if the lighting is bad, or if the handset or even the people on screen move about while they are being filmed. In other words, you can use their phones to video call your friends – just as long as they stand very still and don't do anything, and you don't expect to be able to hear what they're saying. Brilliant!

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Crystal Tipps & Alastair Campbell

MONUMENTAL hubris in adland is not dead yet, to judge by the story of how top dog Ben Langdon came to be booted out of agency McCann Erickson Europe last month.

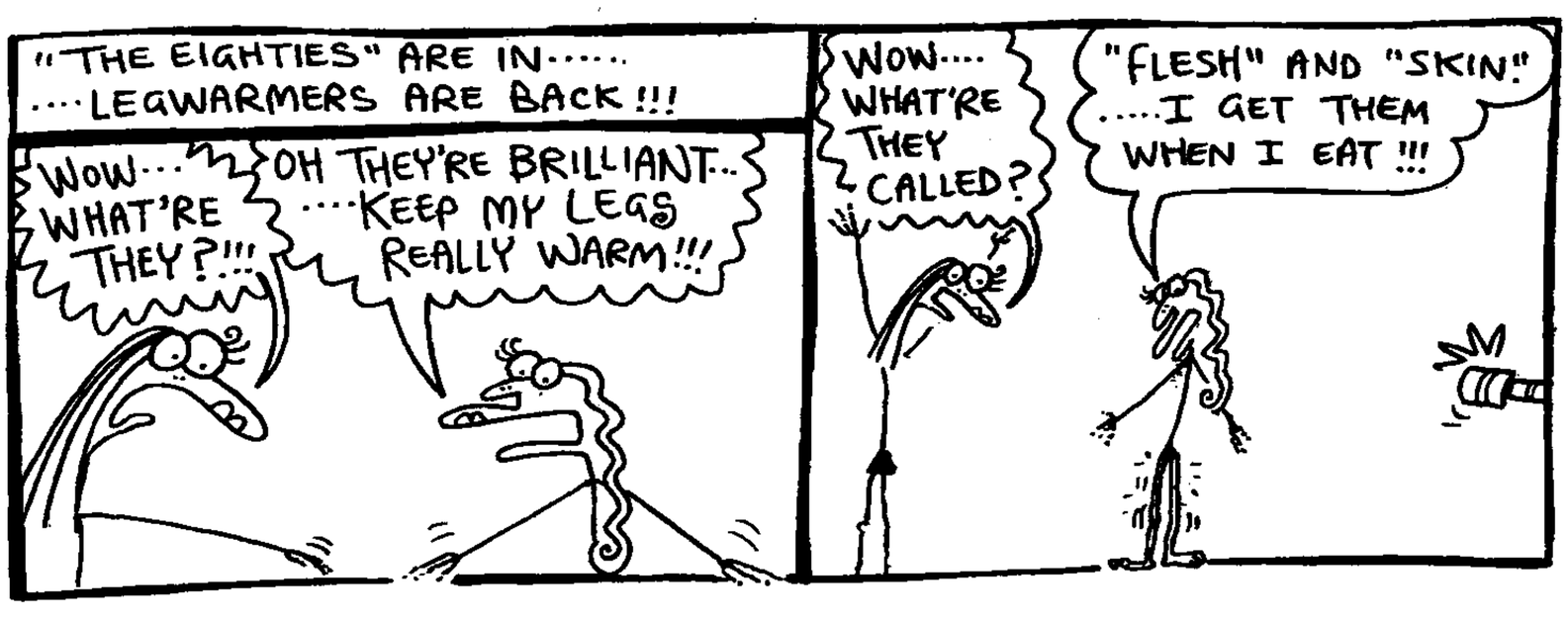
As part of plans to revitalise the fortunes of McCann's in London, Langdon had suggested a name change: to McCann Langdon. As McCann Erickson celebrated its centenary last year and is one of the most venerable names in world advertising, Langdon's move to replace the brand name with his own was given short shrift.

Proving the old *Eye* maxim that nothing succeeds like failure, favourite to replace him is Rupert Howell, who is suddenly available after the brand consultancy he set up in April collapsed in June. He too appears to have an eye for a name: it was called The Growth Organisation.

AND FINALLY, heartening proof that much advertising is a waste of money. Last week Amazon.com, the internet retailer with a brand image most companies would kill for, announced it had achieved a 37% increase in sales in the last quarter. How?

"We shifted money from TV and print advertising to customers, through lower prices and free shipping," said CEO Jeff Bezos. Adland wept.

SUPERMODELS



SIGNAL FAILURES

Craptains of industry

ANOTHER of the pioneers of rail privatisation is at last to reap his reward.

Michael Schabas, who was reportedly a consultant to the transport department on privatisation, teamed up with fellow Canadian Max Steinkopf to exploit the new openings. Their GB Railways company secured one franchise, covering East Anglia, but was so dismal financially it was heading for a cut-price takeover before the strategic rail authority (SRA) bailed it out with public cash last year.

Now FirstGroup is to buy GBR for £22m – a high price for a business whose sole franchise has a few months left. If GBR wins the new East Anglia franchise, FirstGroup pays £40m and Schabas and Steinkopf make more than £3m each. FirstGroup can afford to be generous – it gets huge subsidies for its mediocre rail and bus operations. Its Manchester bus operation makes nearly 14 percent operating profit, while almost a quarter of services funded by the city's transport authority were cancelled in April-June.

Great Western Trains' directors also made their fortunes when their company was gobbled up by FirstGroup, a few months after the 1997 Southall train crash. Richard George made £3m as GWT's director in charge of safety at the time of the Southall crash and was criticised by a judge for not attending the Old Bailey when GWT was convicted of breaching safety rules. He is now in rail consultancy First Class Partnerships, which will soon be involved with the ex-Connex franchise in Kent.

Another safety expert sitting pretty is Chris Leah, Network Rail's safety director. He was paid £872,000 last year, including a £300,000 loyalty payment. At least he can afford a good lawyer when he defends a charge of negligence in relation to the Hatfield train crash in 2000, when he was Railtrack's safety director.

Meanwhile, John O'Brien will soon be looking for a new job. First he ran the franchising office, which was so crap even "new" Labour had to do something about it, replacing it with the SRA. Next he became a director of Railtrack, which soon went belly up. Then he became chairman of Connex UK – the day before Connex was told its sole remaining UK franchise would be terminated.

INTRODUCING the SRA's annual report, chairman Richard Bowker wrote: "Very substantial progress has been made in focusing different parts of the industry in the same direction. The railway family... can be said to have rediscovered a sense of unity of purpose."

But the lawyers and bureaucrats who thrive on tensions between rail companies needn't lose sleep; out in the real world it's business as usual. Thames Trains, for example, is refusing to accept the decision of the industry's disputes resolution committee that it's liable for most of the compensation paid out after the 1999 Paddington crash. Instead it's going to the high court to try to force Network Rail to pay a bigger share of the compensation.

'Dr B. Ching'

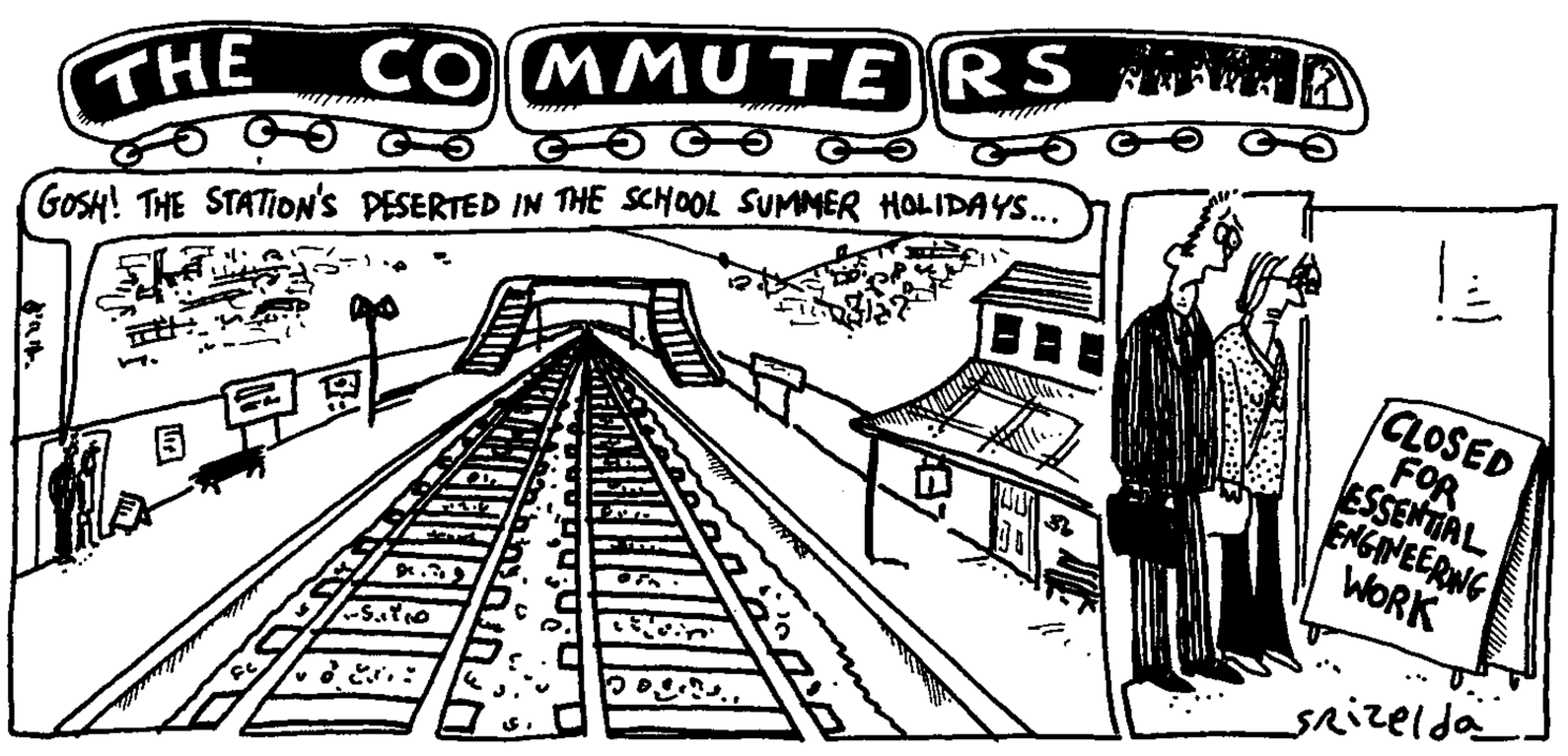
JUST FANCY THAT!

"LONG reflection has never been the forte of Paul Dacre of the *Daily Mail*. After years of remorseless BBC-bashing, he now refuses to print a word against the corporation on the grounds that if Alastair Campbell hates the BBC then it must be beyond reproach. (The idea that both sides might have made mistakes is clearly too difficult a concept for a Manichean editor to understand.)"

— *Private Eye*, 25 July.

"After long years of BBC-bashing by the *Daily Mail*... it now seems that Paul Dacre, the *Daily Mail* editor, refuses to say anything against the BBC on the grounds that it must be OK if Alastair Campbell hates them. Is the idea of both Alastair Campbell and the BBC being wrong too difficult for the *Daily Mail*?"

— Letter in the *Guardian*, 28 July.


THE COMMUTERS
GOSH! THE STATION'S DESERTED IN THE SCHOOL SUMMER HOLIDAYS...
CLOSED FOR ESSENTIAL ENGINEERING WORK
srizelda

DOING THE ROUNDS

Oh Fuck, Not the Working Time Directive

THE new health secretary, Dr John "Oh Fuck, Not Health" Reid has been pressing the flesh at the BMA in an attempt to reach agreement on the new consultants' contract. But the most pressing issue, affecting doctors of all grades, is the impending implementation of the European working time directive (EWTD) which could lead to widespread downgrading of local hospitals – and completely scupper Labour's precious NHS plan into the bargain.

The EWTD requires that by August 2004, junior doctors should work a maximum of 58 hours a week, with further restrictions on length of shift, rest periods and sleep while on-call, falling to 48 hours by 2009. At present, these seem about as likely as Alan Milburn giving the real reasons for his resignation.

A survey of 211 hospitals by the Royal College of Physicians has found that 166 "do not have sufficient numbers of specialist registrars to give continuous cover of acute medical admissions". These hospitals have less than 10 specialist registrars in medicine, with 44 having fewer than five and, at present, completely unable to cope.

In surgery, the situation is equally dire. The Royal College of Surgeons has rightly spotted that a drastic reduction in hours in the current system will have a dire effect on training, with many new consultants already unsafe to independently cover all of the operations in their job description. But the biggest challenge may be to anaesthetists. They consume only 3 percent of hospital resources but contribute to more than two-thirds of trust income. One estimate found that to hit the targets in the NHS plan and comply with the EWTD, every graduate from every medical school for the next five years would need to become an anaesthetist.

The government has a number of options. It could ignore the legislation and run the risk of mass employment law litigation. It could seek to try to delay the legislation, but is unlikely to succeed given its previous delays to the New Deal on junior doctors' hours, which has been widely abused. It could "reconfigure" the NHS, by closing or downgrading lots of smaller district general hospitals and ferrying patients into massive hospitals, which would be politically disastrous and renege on a recent pledge to keep the NHS local. Or it could try to parachute large numbers of junior doctors out of large teaching hospitals and into smaller ones, where most end up as consultants anyway.

The latter seems logical, but many junior doctors deliberately choose to avoid acute general medicine in busy district hospitals because the workload is unremitting, the expectations huge and support and teaching decidedly variable. Hiding in a teaching hospital, doing research and retreating into a very specialised area of medicine is a far more attractive option. This is the heart of the battle between the government and doctors.

"New" Labour feels that the NHS employs doctors and should therefore dictate precisely where they work and what that work should involve. Doctors want a degree of professional autonomy, to have the power to challenge politically driven targets and feel should only accept jobs with humane working conditions and good training. It's a stalemate that even John Reid will have difficulty swearing his way out of.

Thus far, the government's tactic has been to wash its hands of the EWTD and hang trusts out to come up with their own "imaginative" solutions. Without national coordination, hospitals will waste vast amounts of time reinventing the wheel with little chance of success. A measure of Reid's real dedication to his new job will be how tightly (or not) he chooses to grasp this nettle.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

MR AND MRS SMITH, I'M AFRAID YOUR SON'S LOST ALL FEELING ABOVE THE WAIST...
I'M SORRY, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO...
THEY GET LIKE THAT WHEN THEY BECOME MANAGEMENT
CANCEL THOSE OPERATIONS, CLOSE THAT WARD.

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

TAKING THE PEPYS

PUBLICAN Geoff Monks, whose business and health were ruined by a series of grossly unfair food safety prosecutions by East Northants district council, was celebrating last week after a notable court victory.

Eye 1075 told how the council launched a series of vindictive prosecutions against Monks's three pubs following a complaint from a well-connected local solicitor that she had suffered food poisoning after eating at the Snooty Fox, at Lowick, near Kettering. The solicitor, Jenny Lawrence, was later tape-recorded boasting of her friendship with a senior figure on the council.

Despite the council presenting an extremely shoddy case, magistrates ordered Monks to pay a staggering total of £27,500 in fines and costs — by far the largest penalty ever against a sole trader for food safety offences in the UK — later reduced to £20,000 on appeal. Unable to pay, Monks ended up serving two months earlier this year in high security Woodhill Prison, Milton Keynes — some of the time in a cell above Soham murders suspect Ian Huntley.

Last week at Northampton crown court Monks applied for the council's second and third prosecutions against his other two pubs, The Samuel Pepys and the Vane Arms, to be declared an abuse of process. At the Pepys Monks had been fined £12,500 after a mouse was seen in the kitchen; an appeal against conviction was planned. A third prosecution was pending over a cracked window pane in a shed used to house chest freezers at his third pub, the Vane Arms, which like the Pepys has since closed.

Last week Judge HHJ Harris QC declared the council's behaviour in the Pepys and Vane cases to have been unacceptable and stayed proceedings in both. The judge said in 10 years East Northants council had carried out some 7,000 investigations and inspections of food premises, yet in all that time had brought only four prosecutions – three of which were against Geoff Monks.

Monks had had no opportunity to put right what was wrong – the council prosecuted without, for example, issuing improvement notices. Due diligence was not considered in any case. There were significant delays in prosecutions. Each time the council waited for 12 months to act, when according to the food standards agency's guidelines, prosecutions, if they are to take place, should be brought without delay.

The judge accepted that Monks had asked for samples for independent analysis and had never been provided with them. At the Samuel Pepys, Monks was specifically told by principal environmental health officer David Hartley that he would not be prosecuted. Monks took the remedial action that was required – and was prosecuted anyway.

The judge ruled that the Pepys and Vane prosecutions had been an abuse of process and ordered the council to meet Monks's costs in full.

The outcome has come as an immense relief to Monks. What he wants to know now is why the council set this bizarre miscarriage of justice in train in the first place.

● TREBLES all round at tiny Bramham parish council in West Yorkshire. It accepted 200 free tickets, worth £95 each, for this month's Leeds rock music festival. Festival organiser Mean Fiddler handed over the tickets as a sweetener after councillors tried unsuccessfully to block the controversial festival's move to the Bramham Park country estate. The tickets are being sold off for £20 each, with the money swelling parish council coffers (and the wallets, no doubt, of touts).

While tiny Bramham awaits the invasion of 50,000 music fans, residents of Temple Newsam in Leeds – the former venue – will no doubt be heartbroken to miss out the traditional burning of the toilet blocks and stoning of police as the festival ends.

STONED AGAIN

SKIDROW-ON-SEA'S loyal press officer Alan Stone writes in praise of tourism in the council's propaganda sheet *City News*.

"Around eight million visitors come to Brighton and Hove annually," he writes, "boosting the local economy by approaching £400m a year." The Labour party conference alone, observes Stone, brings in 20,000 visitors, who spend £5m. No mention of the Tories, however. Perhaps that is something to do with the fact that the Conservatives have not held a conference in Brighton since 1988, and currently have no plans to do so.

Back in 1988 the Labour mayor of Brighton was Cllr Pat Hawkes, now chair of the city's education committee. It was her job to welcome party conference delegates to the town. That year the Conservatives were in Skidrow for the first time since the IRA attempted to murder the Cabinet in 1984. Against all mayoral protocol – and good manners – Hawkes used her welcome speech to hurl abuse at Margaret Thatcher and her party. The Conservatives have, as a result, never returned to Brighton. Supposing that the Tories might otherwise have held four conferences in Brighton since 1988, it would appear that, by the council's own estimate, Cllr Hawkes's big mouth has cost the city up to £20m so far.

Cabinet member for libraries Bonnie Hart, pictured with Ms Robson, said: 'We hope that this campaign will encourage more people to sue their local library.

Municipal Journal

ROAST LAMBETH...

IF JOHN PRESCOTT is determined to crack down on abuses of the "right-to-buy" scheme which allows council tenants to purchase their homes, he could do well by beginning in Lambeth.

A startling document, produced for the council by auditor PricewaterhouseCoopers and seen by the *Eye*, reveals four cases of fraud involving right-to-buy where people have received houses and discounts on properties they are not entitled to. The fraud uncovered so far has involved seven properties belonging to the borough, worth a total of £500,000. The auditors' report concludes that Lambeth "may not have the control mechanisms necessary to deal with attempted fraudsters in this area" – so many more abuses could be going unchecked.

The report finds that properties and discounts have been awarded to applicants despite documentary proof that regulations had been breached. Dishonest applicants have such faith in the laxity of Lambeth's fraud controls they have made simultaneous requests to buy the council homes they are living in, and for help from the local authority because they are "homeless"! In some cases PWC found Lambeth employees had colluded with fraudsters.

... AND GRAVY

TO ROUND off a perfect week for Lambeth's chief executive Faith Boardman, the Mullard inquiry into allegations of racism in the council under the former Labour administration – highlighted in *Eye* 1074 – found that racial and sexual discrimination and bullying were indeed endemic.

The report comes as vindication for Alex Owolade (*Eyes passim*), the shop steward who was sacked on trumped-up charges after he raised the issue. The verdict of his employment tribunal, due later this month, should be interesting.

The questions Lambeth now has to answer are: What action will it take against those who have been found guilty of racism? What action will it take against the three senior housing managers who sat on Owolade's disciplinary panel? And why has chief executive Faith Boardman not yet fallen on her sword, despite having been accused by the deputy leader of the council, Tory John Whelan, of helping orchestrate the campaign to kick Owolade out of the town hall?

● BIG is definitely better for the housing department at Birmingham city council – especially when sending delegates to strategy conferences. At such a gathering at Villa Park organised jointly by West Midlands local authorities and housing associations, neighbouring Solihull and Sandwell councils sent one delegate each. Brum, meanwhile, sent 38 housing representatives plus a further 10 from other departments. With so many officers available to zip off for the day at the taxpayers' expense, it is hardly surprising that management costs at the housing department are among the most expensive in the country – at £14 per tenant per week.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

I TOLD YOU COUNTLESS TIMES THAT TREE WAS DISEASED. IT'S A DANGER TO LIFE AND LIMB!
I'M SORRY, QUIN, I JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART TO HAVE IT REMOVED
IT'S SHATTERED MY 16TH-CENTURY IZNIK INK POT!
IT'S A BONSAI CALAMITY!

NOOKS and CORNERS

NEEDLESS to say, in the limited competition for the King Alfred Leisure Centre development by the seafront in Hove (*Eye* 1084), Brighton city council has plumped for the £195m scheme designed by American superstar Frank Gehry, in conjunction with our own CZWG Architects.

The landmark element proposed is a wobbly 38-storey tower which promises to loom over the surrounding modest three- or four-storey stuccoed terraces like a Terry Gilliam monster in a *Monty Python* cartoon. Naturally this skyscaper is unconventional, with arbitrary slopes and walls peeling away like old wallpaper surmounted by undulating attachments which create a profile which is neither beautiful nor comprehensible. Never mind: we all know that Mr Gehry is a *genius* – that is all that matters – and he tells us his concept took its "architectural expression from the energy of the city [Hove?!] and the restlessness of the sea." So that's all right then.

Even so, how do we assess such architecture? How are we to react to such a thing if we dare to question the transcendent imperatives of a currently fashionable genius? In his lucrative old-age, Mr Gehry has moved from being an old Californian architect-hippie to an international design superstar, for whose creative doodles cities throughout the world now clamour to build so as to make their reputations.

What they all seek, of course, is the "Bilbao Effect", although there is little hard evidence that Gehry's Guggenheim Museum is primarily responsible for the economic recovery of that depressed Spanish – sorry, Basque – port. As for the building itself, it is but a wild and wobbly tin shed supported on a hidden engineer's structure, whose arbitrary shape is a personal conceit which offers none of the traditional satisfactions of true architecture, such as congruence between form and function, intelligent use of building materials, careful detailing and intellectual coherence. Possibly it offers delight to many, but only of the type to be categorised under that dubious, temporary quality of "excitement".

Gehry's buildings are anti-architecture and mere whimsy, but who dares point out that the emperor is naked when the tailor is a world-acclaimed genius worth millions of dollars? So Brighton must have one too. And if a city can't have Gehry, then there are those other self-proclaimed geniuses in the wings who can produce equally arbitrary and arrogant shapes, which is why Liverpool, as European City of Culture (groan...) in 2008, is desperate to build the gratuitous and pointless "Fourth Grace", that blob on stilts by boorish Will Allsop (*Eye* 1069), in the fond hope that it will bring prestige, and money.

It is all rather pathetic, but neither modern architects nor modern city councils are much known for their intelligence or wisdom and these days they deserve each other. Unfortunately, however, it is our cities, and citizens, who then suffer from the pernicious, mindless cult of the architect superstar.

MEANWHILE, elsewhere in Brighton fine buildings that matter continue to be threatened. As Islam conquers and the Church of England continues to slide, the Brighton 'n' Hove Pastoral Strategy Review Group has targeted, among other fine churches, the principal churches in each: All Saints', Hove, a superb vaulted basilica by Pearson, and St Peter's, Brighton, an early work by the great Charles Barry.

"Radical redevelopment" is proposed for All Saints', "leaving a possibly smaller worshipping area but providing other facilities for church and community use." But if this cannot be achieved, then "reluctantly we recommend the closure." And demolition? As for St Peter's, standing in its gardens in the Steyne, it is the most conspicuous Christian landmark in the city but "maintaining its tradition cannot regrettably be considered an economically sensible option."

Furthermore, the Archdeacon of Chichester considers that: "If a building could be sold to provide affordable housing, I think that this is a very powerful demonstration of putting the Gospel into practice." Or a demonstration of defeatism, philistinism, historical blindness and contempt for the wider community?

'Piloti'

I-SPY

Milford, Surrey

Submitted by G.G. Jones.

£10 paid for similar sub-missions.

(SAE required for return of photographs.)

O·B·N

"He's phoned most days from prison and I've taken him out for the day whenever I could. He has lots of projects under wraps, but he's coming back to see his friends and family. He wants to get back to chatting, dining out. The public have wall-to-wall affection for him. He's really terrific with anybody he encounters – he only has a little bit of trouble with the upper echelons of society and journalists."

Chris Beetles, art dealer and one of Archer's closest friends
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

ANYONE who follows the decline of the classical music world will have noticed the desperate measures taken these days by its major institutions to promote themselves as sexy, laid-back and attractive to a younger audience.

Orchestras are photographed in bleak industrial landscapes with the woodwind draped creatively around the shovel of a JCB. Distinguished soloists hang upside down from cranes or stand for no apparent reason on one leg beside a sewage farm. And anybody who can be persuaded takes his clothes off – a practice pioneered some years ago by English National Opera which advertised an entire season of work with posters showing alleged members of the company in states of undress.

That the luscious bodies in the pictures bore no vague resemblance to the short, fat (mercifully well-clad) actuality on stage caused disappointment. But your average opera-goer doesn't want to be thought lascivious – "we came for the voices, didn't we darling" – so nobody complained. Too much.

Dance audiences, though, are another matter. When they see flesh on offer they demand it. And as a result the whole business of deceitful arts promotion has come under scrutiny from the Advertising Standards Authority which recently upheld a complaint against Phoenix Dance Theatre's last season at Sadler's Wells.

Phoenix had advertised its show with an image of two distinctly naked dancers; and attracted by them, the complainant had purchased a ticket – only to find himself watching a performance in which not a stitch came off. In its defence, Phoenix argued that the nude image was no more than an atmospheric idea of a work that, being brand new, couldn't actually be photographed for its own advance publicity. But the ASA was unimpressed: if a leaflet showed naked dancers, they ruled, the paying public were entitled to naked dancers.

It's a sharp warning to the promotional departments of every arts organisation. From now on, operas featuring short, fat Tristans and Isoldes or Romeos and Juliets will presumably have to show them for what they are on the posters. And crane-hanging conductors will have to prove they can do it, suspended from the lights-rig at the Barbican.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Apparantly the last time it was cleaned they used acid!
That's ridiculous!
ARTS
MICHELANGELO'S DAVID: TO CLEAN OR NOT TO CLEAN?
ROW RAGES SOON.
LIFE OF GRIME...
Half an 'E' would be enough to make it interesting...
ARTS

Letters

Jeff in bin and out

Sir,

We read with approbation excerpts from Jeffrey's diaries in the Mail. It is reassuring to note that his undoubted talent for writing fiction has not been undermined by his brief sojourn here.

We "booked" him as a lightweight, completely insulated from reality and he has wasted no time in proving that our evaluation was absolutely accurate!

Until his next appearance in "Have We Got Screws For You", I am

Your faithful subscriber,
D. JOHNSON,
HMP Wayland, Norfolk.

Powell to the people

Sir,

So Peter Hills (Letters, 1084) comes up with the old chestnut about Prince Charles being unable, or unwilling to defend himself.

Well, the Prince's actions during the divorce and subsequent battles with Diana certainly gave the lie to that notion. He can and does defend himself if it suits his purpose. He also, like the rest of the royal family, has highly paid (by us) press secretaries and PR persons to do the job if he doesn't fancy it. Finally, if he feels it too trivial a matter to engage with himself, he knows he has millions of "loyal subjects" who will certainly take up cudgels on his behalf. Most people in the public eye must dream of having protection of that nature.

Oh, and it's NOT treason. I suggest, Mr Hills, you check out the statutes covering treason: they're all about making war against the monarch, compassing the monarch's death and suchlike, not taking the piss. It might, I accept, be sedition, but I doubt even that.

Ripping the piss out of the royals is an old established tradition in this country. Gilray's cartoons attacking George IV as king, and as regent, were far more savage than anything the Eye's come up with. One satirical verse about him has even made it into the canon of nursery rhymes (Georgy Porgie).

Keep up the good work and I might even buy a subscription!

MIKE POWELL,
Colchester, Essex.

Warballs

"The aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre has been blamed as a factor in the decline of Wimbledon Theatre."

— Wimbledon Guardian.

"A sharp increase in violent assaults and fights has been recorded in Oxfordshire in the past year. But police blamed the increase on new crime recording methods and the effects of the war with Iraq."

— Oxford Times.

"Wendy Spirduso, the communications director for Red Lobster, based in Orlando, Fla., said that according to customer surveys, the emotional and economic turmoil of 9/11 has prompted people to reconnect with friends and family through casual dining. 'Seafood helps them to connect,' she said. 'There is an emotional attachment to the seafood and the people around the dinner table.'"

— New York Times.

Mad scientist?

Sir,

"Boffin", your new columnist, is a scream. The opening salvo (1084) was a plea for yet more nuclear power plants to be built. Never mind the costs, never mind the waste, never mind the threat of proliferation.

About the only justification for considering throwing still more billions at this discredited technology might be to reduce fossil fuel burning. But the second column (1085) is devoted to a wail about how those wishing to disprove climate change can't get funded. How come they haven't approached Exxon, or the American Petroleum Institute?

I can't wait for the third instalment. Maybe this could feature how leaded petrol is good for children's brains? Or, the desirability of using more landfill for our rubbish? Or how agribiz should spread far more chemicals around?

Can I propose a marginal change of nom-de-plume, though? "Buffoon" might be more descriptive.

Yours faithfully,
A.J. WARREN,
Cambridge.

Lookalike

Fat Controller

Duncan Smith

Sir,

Which one is the fat controller?

PETER BLUNT,
Bedford.

Latin lovers

Sir,

*In the cartoon accompanying "Funny Old World" (1085), surely the caption should read "Hic est Lodus Bolloc**arum**", ie genitive plural as opposed to singular? (and that's without even going into the sheer illogicality of making "bolloca" a **feminine** noun).*

Let me know if I am the only one to point this out and I shall start getting out more often at once.

Regards,
SIMON DAVIES,
France.

Sir,

I don't think much of Father Reginald Foster's Latin For Today ("Funny Old World", Eye 1085). "Conformitatis osor" for "hippie"? "Hippie" derives from the US vernacular adjective "hep" meaning "possessing insider knowledge". My shot at "hippie" would be "mysteriorum cognoscens capillatus" ("capillatus" means "long-haired").

While we're at it, "spin doctor" could be "torquitatis clinicus". I'm coining a noun from the Latin verb "to spin", but who gives a toss.

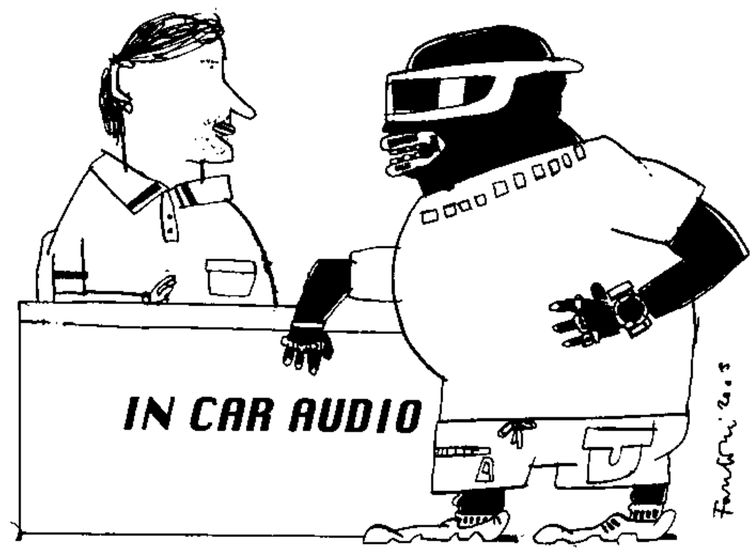
Regards,
RICHARD GEORGE,
St Albans, Herts.

Stiff riposte

Sir,

"Doing the Rounds" in the current issue (1085) contains a worthy piece about the online purchase of Prescription-Only Medicines (POMs), that concludes that although the practice may be

Scenes You Seldom See



"Nothing with too much bass – I only listen to light classical music"

legal, "the Eye is not running the ad..." This is a perfectly principled stance for which you may be applauded.

Towards the back of the same issue, the Classified Advertisements Department has taken a different tack: (p.38 "Eye Care" section. "Erection Perfection with Viagra from Euromed", etc).

This just goes to show that in order to allow the editorial departments room for principle, someone has to pay the bills!

Keep up the good work,

Yours truly,
SIMON MILLAR,
Via email.

Bitter about pills

Sir,

M.D. is right to be worried about dodgy internet pharmacies. But the question he should be asking is why the big, reputable pharmacies are leaving it to the dodgy ones. This might be linked to the retail advantages of keeping us all waiting in their stores while a box of pills is put in a bag – time to spend some more money on the talc, shampoo and sun bronzer. The big chains could easily run a high quality internet and mail order business, with appropriate checking and monitoring, but perhaps they do not want to. So we are left traipsing around and hanging about for a repeat prescription that would fit through the letter box.

Best wishes,
PETER WEST,
YHEC, University of York.

Elementary Watson

Sir,

Congratulations on noticing the Tom Watson "teens" webpage – even if you were at least a month behind everyone else.

Unfortunately, you failed to realise that it's an obvious spoof, designed to attract attention from gullible journalists, who then run stories about it, which then attracts more people to the site.

It's worked. Go to Google and type in Labour MP, and Watson is now the number one hit.

And it's all thanks to people like you.

Yours sincerely,
BRIAN WHILEY,
Hull.

No comment

Sir,

Three of us were discussing David Kelly's death today. All of us thought that he was probably murdered. Young radicals? No – all middle-aged, high-income FT readers.

I see that this possibility is widely debated abroad, and not at all here. Isn't that what Private Eye is for?

IAN HOLTON,
Via email.

Just kidding

Sir,

I found your spoof article in which A.S. Byatt criticised the Mr Men books very funny. However, I can't help wondering if your organ is related to the "New York Review Of Missing The Point"?

While I disagree with much of what Byatt wrote in her article, her main complaint seemed to be directed, not at the fact that these children's books were, er, aimed at children (and pre-teens can handle more complex stuff, by the way), but at the pretentious adults who attempted to justify reading them themselves by saying "No, it's proper literature, honest." As someone who reads the Harry Potter novels because he happens to like a nice, simple (but not too simple) children's book occasionally, I strongly agree. I bet they buy the "grown up" covers, as well.

Having said that I think everybody (Byatt, the people who objected to her comments, everybody) is taking this too seriously. Repeat after me: "It's just stories..."

Yours,
DAVID KENNEDY,
Culloden, Inverness.

Signal failure

Sir,

"Blackleg" in TUC News is clearly ignorant of both train operating companies and railway geography.

The engine named after Lew Adams is operated by Virgin Trains on the West Coast Main Line, not GNER. If "Blackleg" had checked his facts, he would know that GNER operate trains on the East Coast Main Line to Newcastle and beyond, making the chances of the engine named after Lew Adams operating there non-existent.

Yours faithfully,
IAIN ARCHIBALD,
Stirlingshire.

Spiritual renewal

Sir,

Your cartoon of the church transformed into a pub is just a reflection of reality, I'm afraid. The Toad in West Street, Chichester, was formerly St Peter's Church.

Yours,
MARTIN HANLEY,
Faulkland, Somerset.

Blinded by the Sun

Sir,

Re: "Hillsborough and the Sun" letter, 25 July 2003.

I write as a Forest fan who was at Hillsborough on the day of the disaster and who acknowledges that the background causes of the tragedy were the culture of football over the previous 20 years and the well-documented actions of the police that day. However, I have to question "P.E. Dant" (Letters, 1085) who says that the Sun was "wrong" to claim that Liverpool fans caused the 96 deaths by "surging" into the fenced area. How can this be so? Many of those supporters outside in Leppings Lane were ticketless, late and ran into the ground. If they had walked, there would have been no crush. And those who died were fans with tickets who had arrived early. I feel compelled to add that the football culture I alluded to earlier had seemingly culminated at Heysel when Liverpool fans – some ticketless – surged and killed 39 Juventus fans. Hillsborough was quickly claimed by the rest of the media as a police-inflicted tragedy on an innocent football club and its supporters. As there can now surely be no repeat of Heysel or Hillsborough, is it not now time to look again at all aspects of what happened in those days?

ADAM WILSON,
Via email.

Chuck it in

Sir,

I would recommend a week or two's R&R for Cyclops, at a plastic surgeon's perhaps.

His detractors have obviously got the better of him, and he appears to be tendering his resignation in the only ways he knows how.

Crossword 239, 14 down, Give up grub? Cyclops can! (5,2,2)

Crossword 240, 6 down, Love sex (not alfresco) so concede. (5,2,2)

Yours,
MAX CONNELL,
Tenerife.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Going through that crowd is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I did it once on the way out and once on the way in."
JON TICKLE (Big Brother contestant), **Channel 4**
(Jason Hazeley)

"It keeps that pot boiling, and he [Tony Blair] needs that boil to be lanced."
TIM MARSHALL, Sky News
(Mike McNally)

"That was a sort of parson's nose innings – good in parts."
CHARLES COLVILLE, Sky Sports
(Geoff Dossetter)

"It's going to be difficult for me – I've never had to learn a language and now I do."
DAVID BECKHAM, ITV News
(Dr Christopher N.H. Doll)

"Of course it's not against the law to bring children into this country illegally..."
VICTORIA DERBYSHIRE, Radio 5 Live
(Simon Ratcliffe)

Irony filings

Sir,

Bookworm's review of Toby Litt's "Finding Myself" [1083] states that using the word "zeitgeist" without irony was risky. Perhaps so, but not as risky as (ironically) misusing the word "irony" when actually meaning "sarcasm" (no less than twice in one short review).

Although the lower form of wit, sarcasm has its own important place in rhetoric (as every schoolboy knows) and should be triumphed when used, not smothered by a fudged attempt to appear high brow. Leave poor old irony to its proper job, as an unconscious or observed contradiction highlighting the importance of humility.

Yours also despairing of the abuse of apostrophes everywhere,

TIM CARTER,
Via email.

Lost in translation

Sir,

Having been a reader of Private Eye ever since moving to the United Kingdom in 2001, I keep being astonished by the frequent ortho-graphical and grammatical mistakes occurring in foreign language expressions, especially those in German and Italian (Eyes passim).

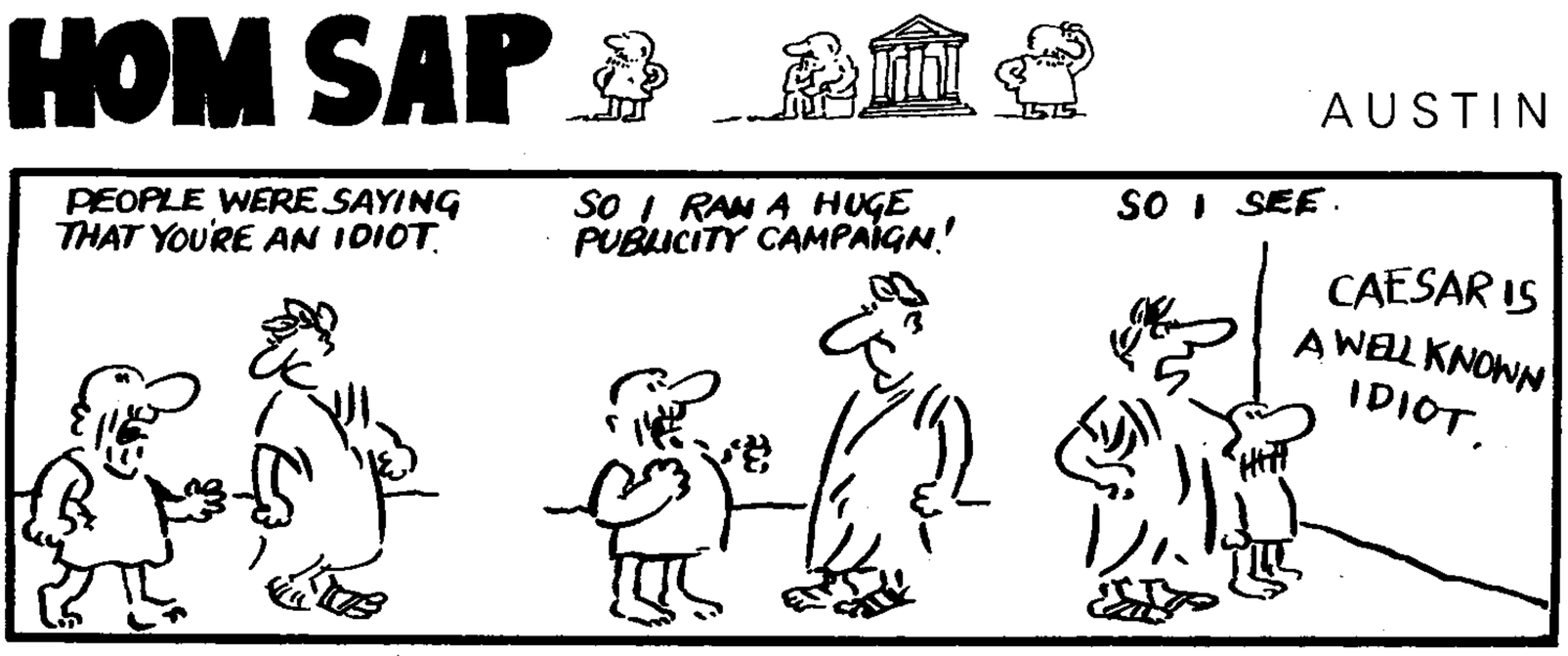
While some expressions are surely meant to sound German or Italian to the English-language eye and ear, in which case incorrect spelling or grammar might have been used intentionally, many others I would consider unsuitable for a publication such as Private Eye. In Eye 1085 for example, the four German expressions in the BBC Radio 3 column on page 20 accumulate no less than seven orthographical or grammatical mistakes.

I have grown up speaking German and Italian at home, subsequently studying French, English and Spanish from an early age on. After studies in English and German Literature and Linguistics at Zürich University and the Sorbonne in Paris, I now work as a freelance translator and proofreader for German and Italian (and occasionally for French and Spanish).

I therefore would like to offer my freelance proofreading services to Private Eye for any occasional use of German, Italian, French and Spanish, ensuring a consistent spelling policy without taking away any of the intentional humour.

Should you be interested in the nature of the above-mentioned inaccuracies, I would be more than glad to expound them in a personal interview.

Yours faithfully,
FERNANDO TIBERINI,
London W3.


HOM SAP
AUSTIN
PEOPLE WERE SAYING THAT YOU'RE AN IDIOT.
SO I RAN A HUGE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN!
SO I SEE.
CAESAR IS A WELL KNOWN IDIOT.

Letter from **Rome**
from Our Own Correspondent

AS the summer heat descends, holidays and relaxation are high on the agenda of Italy's politicians. And none more so than for Silvio Berlusconi, our prime minister and president of Europe for six months, recently in hot water for offending the Germans with a typically considered witticism about concentration camps.

The twice-married business tycoon turned politician is away resting at his Sardinian bolthole with his delightful young secretary, Francesa Impiglia. But his quiet may be disturbed by new revelations suggesting that Roberto Calvi, the president of the Banco Ambrosiano who was found hanging under Blackfriars bridge in London 20 years ago, was killed and had not committed suicide, as coroners recorded at the time.

Mr Berlusconi came to politics late in life and had yet to join the political fray at the time of Calvi's death. Many of our leading politicians, however, were involved with the Banco Ambrosiano, which collapsed days before Calvi's body was discovered in June 1982. A few of the pope's bishops were also in business with the banker, notably Bishop Macinkus, who was then in charge of much of the Vatican's finances.

Italy has never been as corrupt as it was at the time of the Calvi affair, when the men from the Mafia were able to mix freely with people in authority in Rome. The prime minister at the time, Bettino Craxi, who was a close friend of Berlusconi in those days, eventually had to run away from Italy to escape prosecution and went to live in Tunisia, where he died.

While Berlusconi seems set to distance himself from the Calvi imbroglio, frantic lobbying for protection by some of the richest and most powerful politicians, bankers and freemasons of the 1980s may be harder to resist. Such calls are likely to be especially irritating after things had been going so well. A new law makes it impossible for Berlusconi to stand trial on any charge relating to corruption — allegations of which have been flowing freely for some time.

And his pro-war stance cost him little here (our brave boys were never actually despatched to Iraq to fight the good fight) while gathering much admiration across the Atlantic. Indeed, President Bush invited Berlusconi to his Texas ranch and had *insalata caprese* put on the menu for the man he embraced in public and called "my Silvio". No such generosity from the British prime minister, however, who turned down Mr Berlusconi's offer of a freebie in favour of Cliff Richard's holiday pile in Barbados. Such a pity: our Silvio would have so loved a sing-song with the Blairs.

Even Mr Berlusconi's natural enemies in opposition are uncharacteristically quiet. Politicians from the centre left are apprehensive over a separate scandal also now brewing. They are being accused of receiving hefty payments and privatisation-linked sweeteners into Swiss bank accounts from Slobodan Milosevic, the former Serbian dictator, in the late 1990s.

MPs investigating the affair fell foul of the Swiss culture of secrecy and had to enlist the help of the Italian consul in Lugano after one of the banks allegedly involved called in the police. Nevertheless, several damning details have surfaced. According to one witness, a clever code was used to mask the identity of those alleged to have taken bribes — Piero Fassino, the long-legged leader of the former Communist party, is said to have had money paid into an account in the name of "the stork". Another account, called *mortadella*, is reported to have been opened for Romano Prodi, now head of the European commission, who is well-known for his fondness for the poor man's proscuito. And Lamberto Dini, the former prime minister, is accused of having an account in the name of *rospo* — Italian for "toad".

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "9/11 was a wake-up call to us all," James Frank of the American Legion told reporters in Pleasanton, California, "and we need to act fast to support homeland security. We can't wait around for the FBI and the police to come up with solutions, when we have bad guys living among us. In the world of homeland security, you have to be more open-minded, and that's why we're sponsoring classes that teach us how to dowse for terrorists."

Frank was defending the controversial decision by the American Legion and the Air Force Association to hold courses that teach war veterans how to locate pure evil with a wooden stick. "In essence, you just point a hazel

twig at anyone you think looks suspicious, or Middle Eastern, and see if it twitches. And if it does, you can restrain them using necessary force, until the police arrive to arrest them. We're still learning and refining the techniques at the moment, but if it works, maybe you could identify a potential terrorist while he's still at the airport. Maybe the same technique could even be used to find a dangerous bag among thousands in an airport. Who knows? But don't shoot the messenger, just because you're not comfortable with the message."

Some veterans groups have expressed scepticism about the dowsing classes, but Commander Rene LaVigne of American Legion Post 237 added his weight to the scheme. "I think it's got its merits," he commented. "In fact, our government has been using it for years. They just don't make a big deal out of it, because it's not scientifically provable." *(Tri-Valley Herald, 25/3/03. Spotter: Prof. Patrick J. Boylan)*

— ● —

● *"I decided to advertise it in the window of Infinity Foods because I wanted people to use it for consumption, and not for anything weird," Jeanette Mason told reporters in Brighton. "I was thinking about selling it on the ebay site, but they won't sell body parts, so I'm relying on my handwritten card, offering to sell my excellent placenta to the highest bidder."*

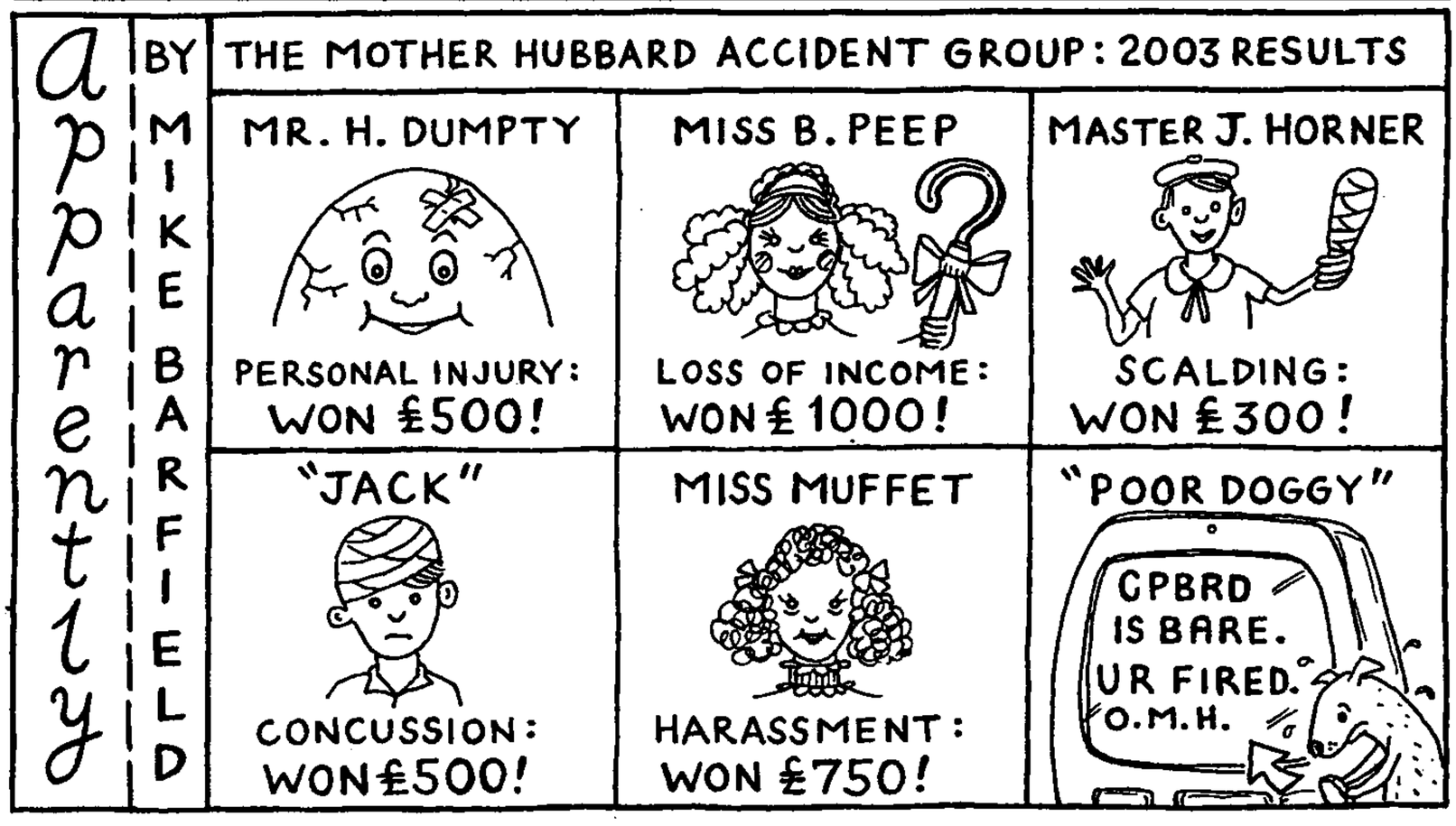
Earlier, eight-months pregnant Jeanette had explained why she had placed her unusual advertisement in the window of a vegetarian wholefood store. "Placenta is considered to be one of the most nutritional things to eat, and I didn't want to throw it away if someone might be able to use it. I'm willing to consider all offers of £10 or over, but if I don't get any by the time I give birth, I have a couple of friends who are willing to eat it. One of them is a vegan, which just goes to show. Fried with a little garlic and some oregano, it's delicious. A bit like chicken actually." (The Argus (Brighton) 2/6/03. Spotter: A. B. Smith)

— ● —

● "You see a lot of unusual things in court, but this is one of those occasions where I keep asking myself 'what was he thinking?' " Daniel Radke admitted at a press conference in Bonn. "Blackmail is regrettably common in our society, but never before have I heard of a blackmailer who gave his bank details to his victim, so that the money could be paid directly into his personal account."

Radke, a spokesman for the city's criminal court, was commenting on the case of Dietrich Schneider, who had just been fined 1,350 euros for attempted blackmail. "Schneider used to work for his victim, an electronic goods wholesaler, but felt aggrieved after he lost his job, and decided to exact revenge. He knew that there were some irregularities in the company's accounts, so he sent the manager a letter, threatening to report him to the tax office unless he transferred 30,000 euros to his account. The manager went straight to the police, who immediately contacted the bank, discovered Schneider's identity, and arrested him that afternoon. He was astonished when they turned up at his flat, because it apparently hadn't occurred to him that he could possibly be traced from the numerical sequences in his bank details.

"It's not my job to advise criminals, but I don't think I'll be giving away too many secrets if I say this. The first rule of blackmailing is that all financial transactions should be strictly in cash." *(Tiscali News, 18/7/03. Spotter: Peter Wilkinson)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

THIS WEEK'S LETTER TO PARISHIONERS HAS BEEN DICTATED BY MR PRESCOTT OF THE WORKING MEN'S CLUB IN THE ABSENCE OF THE VICAR ON HIS WELL-DESERVED HOLIDAY BREAK.

Brothers and sisters!

Once again it has fallen to my lot to take charge of parish affairs, owing to the vicar's understandable decision to "get away from it all" by going off to stay with one of his rich showbusiness friends in the West Indies.

Notice that it is not Mr Brown who Tony turns to when he needs someone to clear up the mess he has left behind to go off on holiday.

Don't get me wrong. Gordon has done a great job in the past keeping the parish accounts in good order, but, frankly, now it has been discovered the figures don't exactly add up, he has his work cut out trying to work out where he is going to raise the £27 billion needed to pay for all his crackpot schemes, such as building an extension to our St Albion's primary school.

So no wonder that when he is looking for a safe pair of hands, Tony should as usual turn to yours truly, and my only regret is that he did not ask my advice about one or two things earlier with regard to the chaoticisation of parish business which has been an inevitable ensual of his failure to consult me.

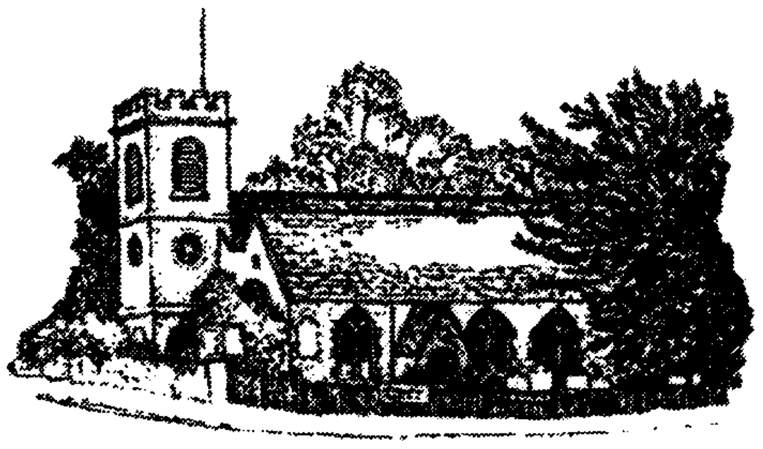
For a start I could have told him not to "get into bed" with that American friend of his, the Rev. Dubya, who is obviously a Born-Again-Nutcase, as anyone could see a mile off.

Then to my mind he has been asking for trouble for a long time by relying on these backroom boys he's so keen on, like that creepy little handyman who used to be our churchwarden, not to mention the real villain around the vicarage. [Editor's note: Owing to a "crash" on the vicarage computer, this section of Mr Prescott's message has got lost in cyberspace.]

Thirdly, I could have told Tony a long time ago, if he'd listened, that he should be very careful of that wife of his and her friend Carole.

Pauline and I needed only one look at that one, with her leather trousers and kinky boots, to know that she spelt trouble with a capital "T". Even Mr Campbell was bright enought to sus that one, but was Tony prepared to listen? No way.

So, if he wants to sort that one out, my advice is that he should get rid of Cherie



and her little friend double-quick before they do any more damage to his standing in the parish. (Remember what happened to the Tsar of Russia when his wife got too friendly with Mrs Rasputin – they all ended up at the bottom of some coal mine!)

Which brings me to my own plans for sorting the parish out in Tony's absence. I have put up in the Church hall a map showing all the areas of so-called green space in the parish, including the graveyard, the allotments and the school playing field, all of which should be redesignatified as prime building sites for much-needed non-affordable residential development.

To my mind, this is the kind of thing we should be prioritising instead of chasing round the world trying to solve everyone else's problems except our own.

Let them sort out their own problems, is my message to Tony. After all, it was they who who got themselves into such a mess in the first place.

All that apart, I am sure you will all join me in wishing the vicar and Cherie a very relaxing holiday in the sun!

Yours (still hard at work!)

John

A Statement from the Editor of the Newsletter, Mr Campbell

In view of the ill-informed speculation around the parish about my future plans, let me put you all straight.

1. I have always made it clear that I was not going to do this job forever.
2. If I leave it will be on my own terms and nobody else's. Is that clear? The vicar well knows that I could do a lot of damage to him and his wife if I chose to reveal certain things, and I could be very well rewarded for doing so.
3. I am certainly not going to step down, so long as it looks as if I am only doing so because of the incident involving the tragic death of our much-loved local doctor, Dr Kelly. That frankly had nothing to do with me, and if anyone needs to examine their conscience it should be a certain local journalist who I shall not name because you all know who I am talking about.
4. When Mr Hutton, our much-respected legal adviser, completes his inquiry which will completely exonerate me of any wrong-doing in this matter, then and then alone I might consider "moving on" to develop my career in other directions.
5. Anyone who does not understand the above is scum. Do you all hear me? SCUM! That is the only word for all of you, and the sooner I get shot of you all, the better. But only on my own terms and at a time of my own choosing. Is that understood by all of you (and I include "Holy Joe" himself, sunning on some beach somewhere with that mad wife of his!).

Hullo from Sunny Barbados!

Hi!

You will be pleased to know that Cherie and I and the kids are having a great time here in the wonderful island of Barbados, thanks to the generosity of our brother-in-the-Lord Sir Cliff Richard! It's been a great relief to be able to relax and swim and knock down the odd rum punch, without having to worry about poor Dr Kelly or those wretched weapons of mass destruction that everyone at home seems so obsessed with! We'd like to say "wish you were here", but, frankly, it's a great relief that you're not!

Tony and Cherie
(not forgetting Baby Leo!)

WORLD FIRST FOR ST ALBION'S!

For the first time an ordinary vicar's wife has been featured in the world's most prestigious fashion magazine, Marie Claire Short. And no prizes for guessing which vicar's wife we're talking about! Cherie took the journalists on a guided tour of the vicarage, and was photographed being given make-up tips by local beautician Carole, of "You Couldn't Make It Up" in the High Street. The journalists were fascinated to hear how she manages to juggle her duties as a vicar's wife with being a mother of three and a high-flying career woman in her own right! Copies of the magazine will be available at the back of the Church after next Sunday's Family Singalong.

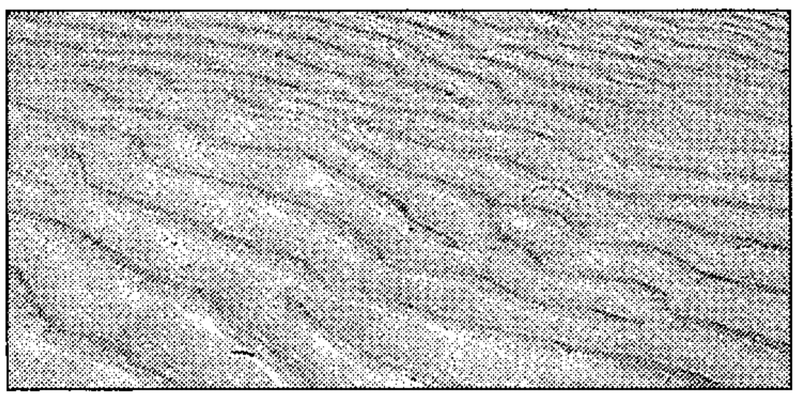
IMPORTANT

FUND-RAISING KARAOKE EVENING FOR 'SAVE THE VICAR' APPEAL

All parishioners are reminded that there will be a special charity Karaoke evening in the Church hall next Thursday at 7.30pm. Cherie Booth (aka our vicar's wife!) has kindly agreed to repeat her recent triumph in Beijing, when she managed to remember all the words of a certain famous Beatles song! You too can singalong with Cherie and her friend Carole ("My Old Man's A Conman") Caplin.

☆KIDDIES' PUZZLE KORNER☆

To while away those long rainy August afternoons, can you find in this picture the missing Weapons of Mass Destruction?

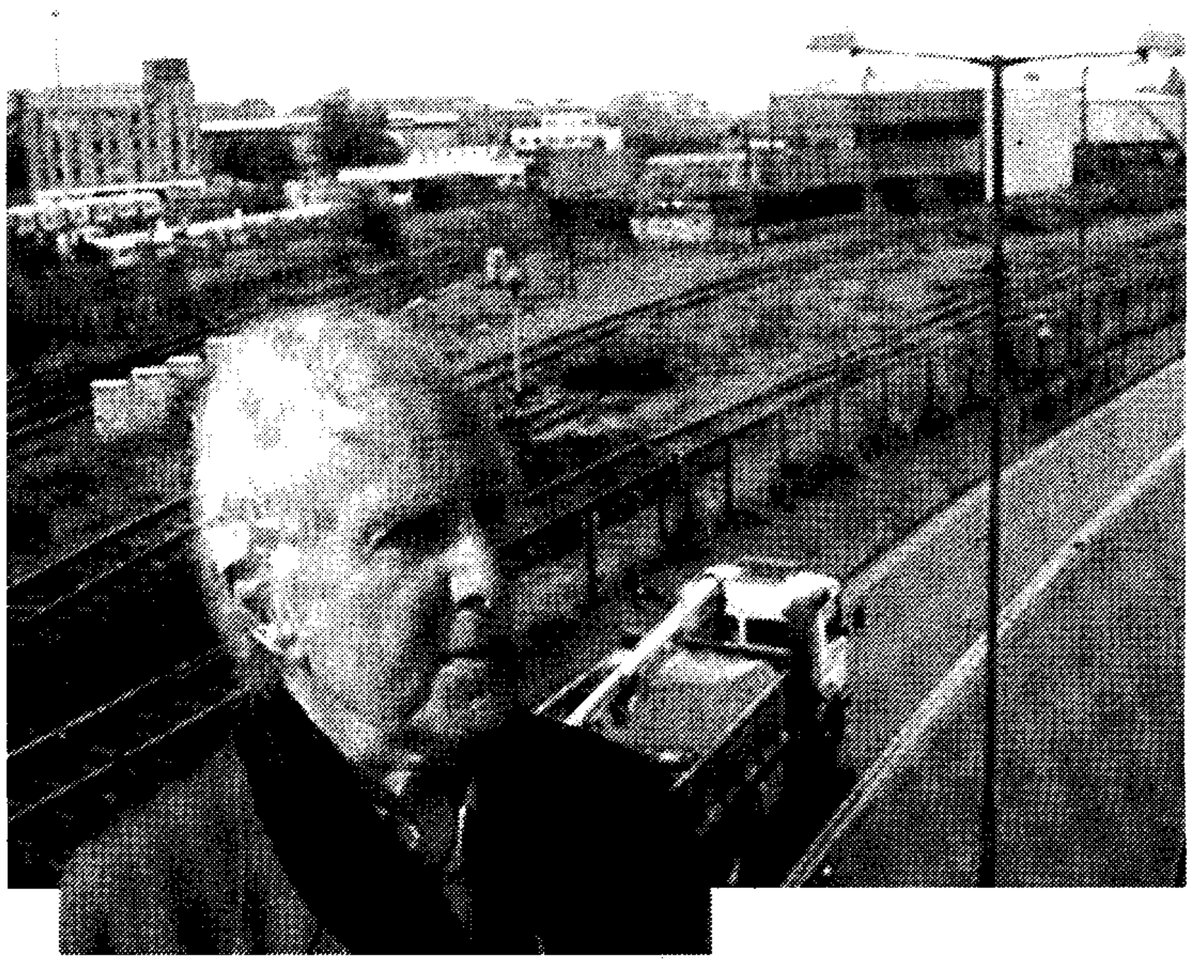


If you spot them, mark the site with a cross and send at once to Mr Hoon c/o the Vicarage who is waiting up all night for your reply!

TV: What You Missed

MY PILGRIMAGE

with **Brian R. Sewell**



(White-haired art historian seen driving ancient Mercedes along the North Circular)

Sewell *(for it is he)*: To be truthful I have no idea why I, at the age of 73, should be sitting here in a ten-mile tailback somewhere on the North Circular.

(Shot of cars standing still in heavy rain)

For hundreds of years pilgrims travelled along this very route that leads eventually to the heart of Neasden, known to the Romans as Neasdonia, and later a place of pilgrimage to the burial site of St Bruno, the patron saint of smoking – of which, alas, nothing remains today. I wonder: who are my fellow pilgrims on this long and infinitely tedious journey?

(Shot of interior of Ken's Cafe [Exit 94]. Sewell seen toying with the Ken's All-Day Special [egg, bacon, beans, sausage, chips, tomato, fried bread and cup of tea])

Sewell *(to cabbie)*: May I ask where you have come from?

Cabbie: Braintree in Essex is my domicile. But I was actually born in Wanstead.

Sewell: Wanstead? It sounds delightful!

(Overhead shot of Sewell's car taking wrong turning. Signpost points to "World Of Leather")

Sewell *(in car)*: This surely is a mistake. But nevertheless the World Of Leather does sound appealing. I wonder what I shall find...

(Cut to interior of large furniture showroom, full of leather sofas)

Salesman: This is our Florida range, Sir. It's fully upholstered, it comes in Deep Burgundy or Midnight Blue with the two matching chairs. We discount this range at £3,999 (delivery extra).

Sewell *(clutching umbrella)*: How perfectly hideous! *(Looks at camera)* It's hard to imagine the mentality of someone who could conceive of having such an utterly grotesque artefact in his home.

(Cut to Neasden football ground)

Sewell: At last, journey's end. But not a sign of St Bruno, let alone the famous Abbey which stood upon this spot. May I ask you good people whether you have come to pay your respects to this great spiritual leader of the Middle Ages?

Sid and Doris Bonkers *(for it is they)*: No, Squire, we 'ave come 'ere for the game.

Sewell: The game? What manner of game, may I ask? I see no pheasants.

Sid: No. Football match, mate. Dollis Hill.

Sewell: Football! How exhilarating! We see here this huge open space full of enthusiasm and excitement. This magnificent stadium, built, I believe, in 1941 by Prendergast and Crook...

(Shot of game in progress)

Sewell *(with Sid and Doris, waving scarves)*: We are indeed the pilgrims of today, with today's new religion. Surely if Giotto had been alive in our century he would have painted this very scene. The brightly coloured shirts. The thrills and spills...

(Neasden player sent off)

Sewell *(waving umbrella)*: The referee's a bastard!

Sid & Doris: Go on, you tell 'im, Brian!

(Music)

NEXT WEEK: *Brian Sewell continues his journey, trying to find an exit off the North Circular.*

Kelly's links to Al Qaeda

by Our Political Staff Tom Baldlie

THE disgraced former Ministry of Defence scientist Dr David Kelly may have been connected to the terrorist group Al Qaeda, writes **Alastair Campbell** *(surely "Times Top Political Staff? Ed.)*

Sources close to Osama bin Laden claim that Dr Kelly's religion, the fundamentalist semi-muslim sect of Bali Hi, was actually a cover for the terrorist group, although there is no evidence at all to substantiate this claim, since it is obviously true. Particularly since Dr Kelly, although happily married with children, was known to have a number of gay friends, many of whom he will have met as an outpatient at the Priory where he may well have been undergoing treatment for a lifelong addiction to alcohol, narcotics and of course depression, which could well have led him to take his own life rather than anything which the government may or may not have done.

The Enquiry, led by Lord Sitton, will have to consider all these facts about Kelly being bonkers before coming to its conclusion that Alastair Campbell and Mr Blair are clear of any blame whatsoever.

On other pages

'Turn off your BBC' says our Media Editor **Rupert Murdoch**.

"Typical – they're working on a 'spoiler'!

BUM COMES OUT AS BRITAIN SIZZLES!

by Our News Staff
Hugh Wottagh-Schorcher

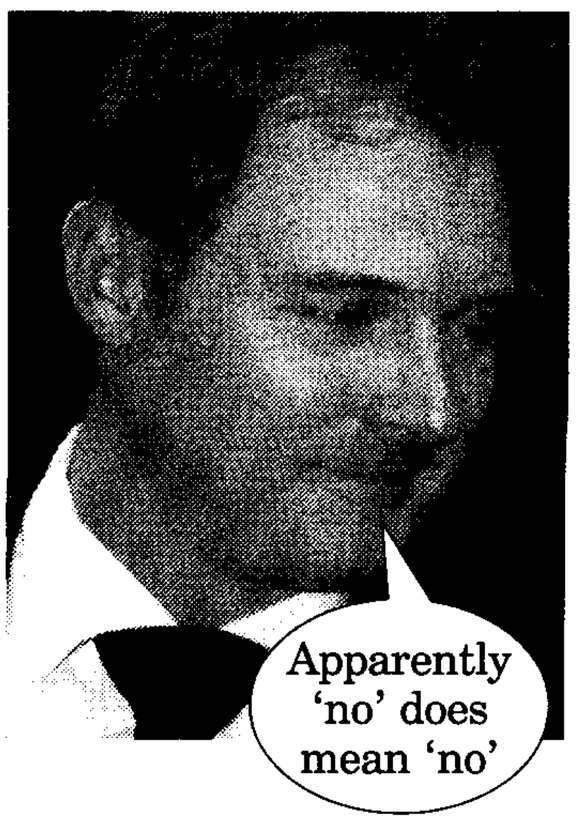
80-90-100º! And still temperatures soared yesterday as British males boiled over at the sight of Kylie's bum.

Said one bum-baked Brit, "I don't know how I'm going to last the week. The bum is really hot and my brain has melted."

Pix 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

©The Daily Telegraph

ITV REFUSE TO REHIRE JOHN LESLIE



ULRIKA 'ASKED FOR IT'

by Our Showbiz Staff
Matthew Wrong

JOHN LESLIE has spoken about how he and Ulrika Jonsson enjoyed rampant publicity together from the first time they met.

"From the first moment we laid eyes on each other we both knew the only thing we wanted was to enjoy red hot publicity with each other," Leslie told reporters. "She was fantastic between the sheets of the tabloids and she told me afterwards that it was the best publicity she'd ever had."

Ulrika, however *(cont. p. 94)*

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S LIFESTYLE GURU!!!

■ **GEOFF HOON – What a rat!!!? Fancy swannin' off on yer hols when you should be at the funeral of the man you helped murder!!!? How low can you get??!? While mourners are a-weepin' and a-wailin' at the graveside of the deceased doc, you are a-soakin' up the sun by the poolside!!!?! As you down another dacquiri, Geoff, spare a thought for the loved ones that you have deserted in their hour of need!!?!?!**

■ HATS OFF to Geoff Hoon!!! The minister with a heart of gold who knows when he's not wanted??!?! Imagine the family's faces if Geoff had been insensitive enough to turn up at the graveside, a-weepin' and a-creepin' in his black tie!!?!?! No, gentlemen, Geoff did the right thing by staying away and going off to sun himself with a few dacquiris by the pool!!?!? Cheers, Geoff, and have one on me!!!?!?

■ *LET'S HEAR it for the Karaoke Queen!!!! Cherie Blair, Mister, in case you hadn't noticed, who had the Beijing blokes 'n' babes a-tappin' and a-clappin' with her Beatles hits of yesteryear!!???! How many women would have had the balls to stand up and give it a go – specially when she can't sing and looks a fright whatever her creepy life guru Carole tries to do!!?!!? Come off it, Cherie!?!? You must be mad to take the mike in China – no wonder we all take the mike out of you back home. Geddit???!?!*

■ **JOHN LESLIE!!!! What a complete bastard!!?!?!** (You can't do this, Glenda. I've just bought his story for £500,000. Ed.)

■ JOHN LESLIE – what a great guy!!!? And what a complete cow Ulrika must be. *(You can't do this either. I'm still negotiating with her agent. Ed.)*

■ HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Heatwave Hunks!!!

● **Cardinal Ratzenberger** – He's the Pope's homophobe hit man!!?! Shame you're celibate but you can't have everything in this life!!???!?

● **Bishop Gene Robinson** – He's the gay Bishop who's taken the States by storm!!?!? Pity you're not straight, but you can't have everything in this life!!?!

● **John Redwood** – the Tories' Mr Sex – They call him the Vulcan, but underneath his scaly exterior, he's 100% red-blooded martian. *(Surely "male"? Ed.)*

Byeeee!!!

THE Sun

PRESCOTT LOVE CHILD SHOCK

by our Political Staff
Rebekah Wad

THE DEPUTY Prime Minister was facing a major scandal last night after sensational revelations concerning himself and a secret love child.

MORE SHOCK

The nation was stunned to discover that the Deputy Prime Minister is married to someone who had a child out of wedlock a long time ago before they even met.

Full story p9, 10, 11 ,12, 94.

MAN FLIES ACROSS CHANNEL

by **Rude Eddington**

THERE was astonishment today after a man flew across the Channel aboard a device called a British Airways jet.

The delighted Economy Class passenger told reporters, "A great deal of preparation went into my attempt – buying a ticket and so forth – but, in the end, it was probably just luck."

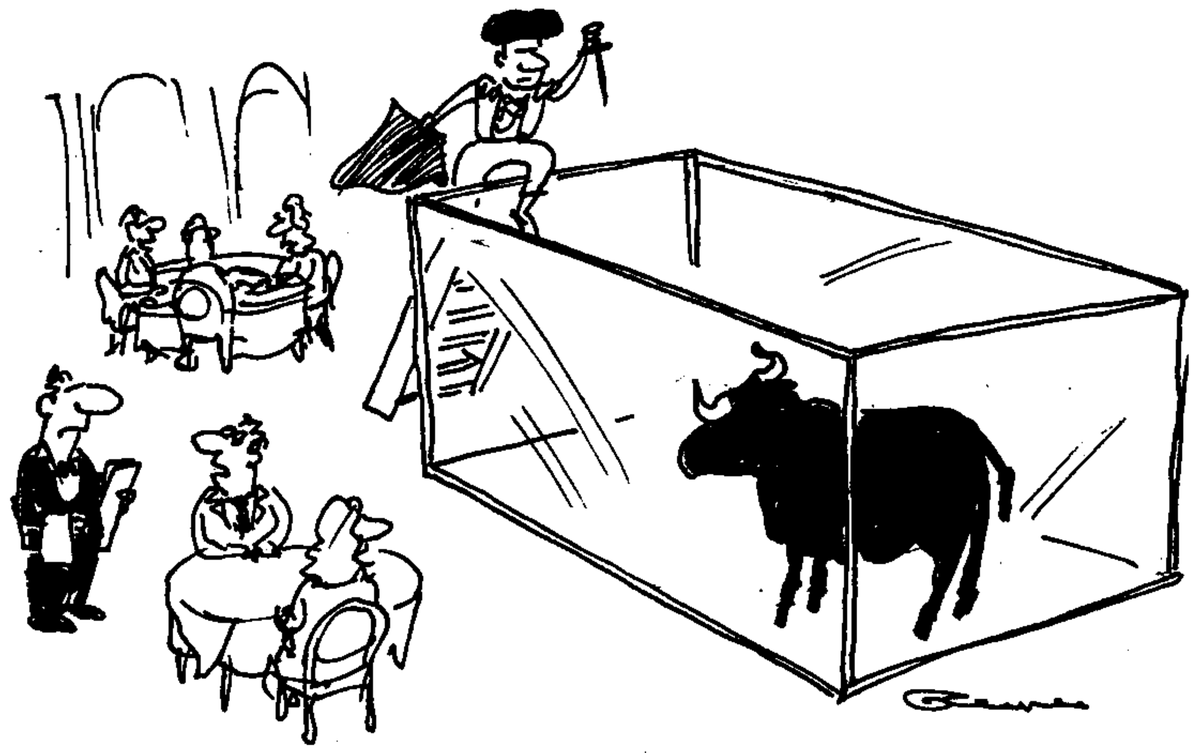
News of the successful flight aboard a British Airways jet will have delighted the thousands of holiday-makers who'd assumed, having booked BA, they'd have to glide across the Channel this summer and *(cont. p. 94)*

More than Just Friends

A new introduction agency providin a personal service for bust professional people.

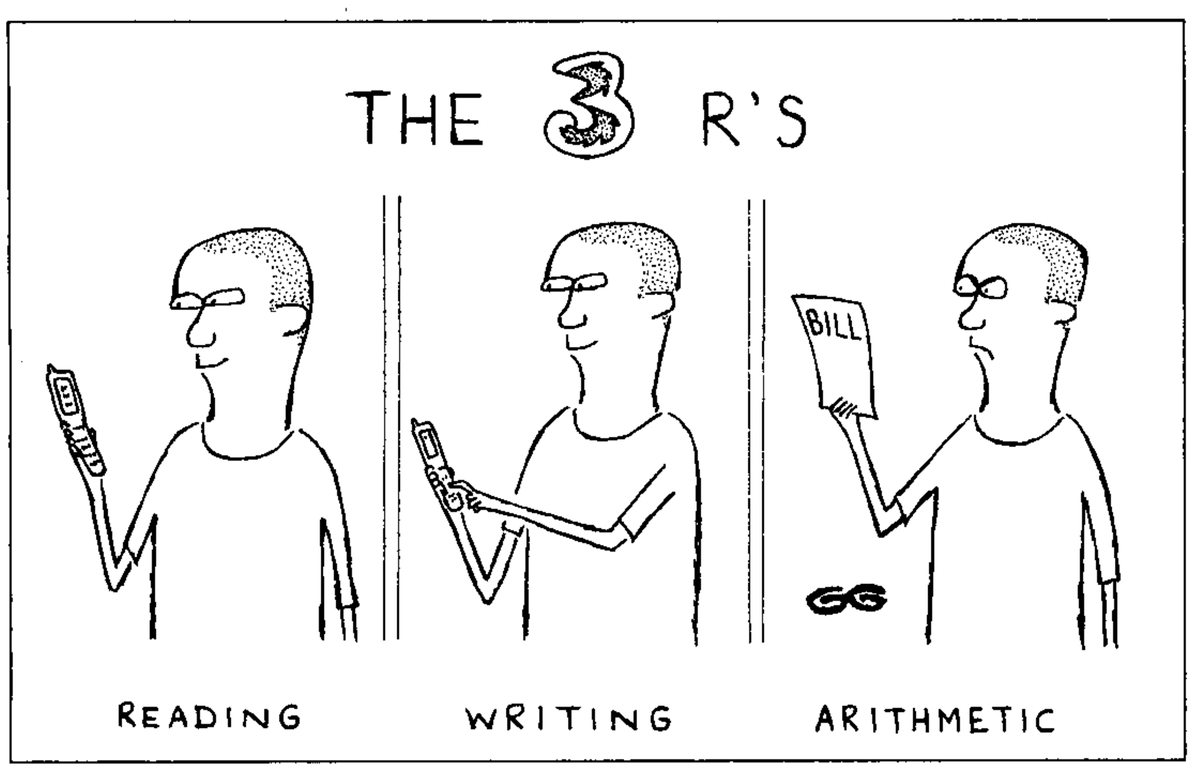
Affordable, approachable, friendly.

Advertisement, The Guardian Guide



"Actually, I think we'll just have the tapas"

LORD'S TEST



BLAIR GOVERNMENT MILESTONE

by **Clement Attlee**

TONY BLAIR's government was celebrating a historic milestone this weekend as it broke the record for the number of consecutive days in office that a Labour government hadn't located weapons of mass destruction.

"This truly is an historic event that we do not want highlighted in any way at all," said the Prime *(cont. p. 94)*

Film of the Week
NOW ON DVD

Monsieur Hoon's Holiday

Classic Film Comedy

■ Nothing goes right for the gangly Monsieur Hoon as he sets off for his annual holiday. No sooner has he left home than his world falls apart as his boss tries to sack him and everybody calls him a bastard. Hilarious sequence as he tries to set fire to an incriminating bag of secret papers and ends up getting his own fingers burnt.

108 minutes. Black and white. English subtitles.

Exclusive to all newspapers

Me And My Week

by TV Celeb

THE great thing about being on the telly a lot is that newspapers ring you up and say "Will you do a column for us?"

This is very easy to do because, as a TV personality, you naturally live a very exciting life, meeting many other celebrities and being invited to all sorts of important social events, attended by some of the most interesting celebrities of our time.

Take last week, for instance. I had the pleasure of being asked to a lunch for the 'Celebrities of the Year' awards at the Savoy. There in the same room were an awesome number of the most familiar faces and voices in Britain today. Stephen Fry was there, Anne Robinson, Andrew Marr, Clarissa Dickson Wright, Carole Caplin, Nigella Lawson and a host of others.

The roll-call of the famous was too long to bore you with them all. But suffice it to say that the conversation was sparkling, the jokes were cracking, the champagne was bubbling and we were all kept in suspense to know which of us would eventually be chosen as the top "celeb" of 2002.

Charles Kennedy

At last the moment came, and I can reveal that I was one of the very few in the room who knew in advance the name that was to emerge from the famous "buff envelope", because I had been privileged to serve on the panel of judges, along with Stephen Fry, Andrew Marr, Anne Robinson and Nigella Lawson.

So I was hardly surprised when John Humphrys, who was our presenter for the occasion, read out the name of the lucky *(cont'd. p. 94)*

SHOULD THE MIRROR PAY THIS MAN MILLIONS?

by Our Crime Staff

A MAN accused of serious offences has been in receipt of an annual six-figure sum paid by the Daily Mirror newspaper.

He is Piers "Fill Your Boots" Moron, allegedly guilty of a big-time Stock Market scam in 1999.

The Press Complaints Commission is now to investigate charges that the Mirror has broken the press's code in paying huge sums of money to Moron.

● *Full story 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.*

The Funniest Man of the 20th Century

FOR NEARLY 100 years Bob Hope had humanity laughing like no other comedian before or since. Here are just some of the gags which earned him the title "Funniest Man in the Universe".

ON BING

"Bing said he'd play golf with me the other day. But then he cancelled and I heard later that he'd gone fishing."

ON PRESIDENT REAGAN

"I had dinner at the White House last week with the president. He thought I was Bing Crosby."

IN VIETNAM

"You guys are doing a great job out here. Bing would be really proud, but he said he was too busy to come because he'd gone fishing."

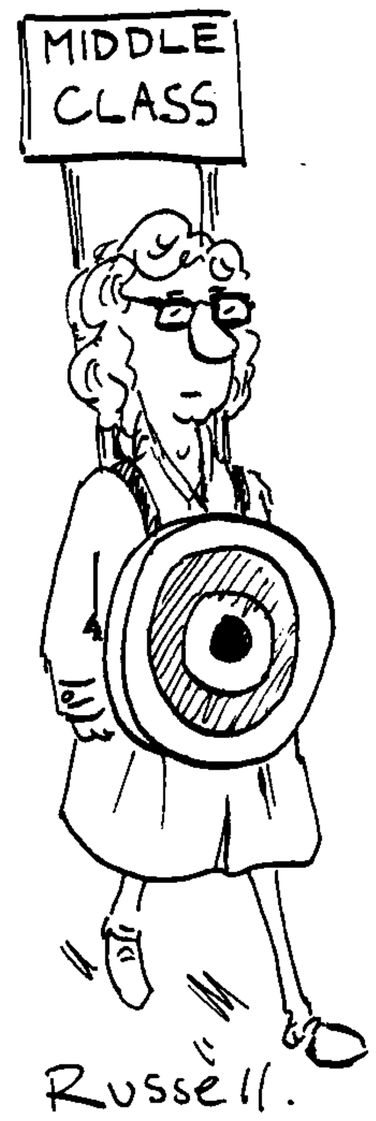
AT THE ROYAL VARIETY PERFORMANCE

"What an honour it is to be back here in London, performing before the Queen of England. Bing sends his regards and says he would love to have been here, but he had a very important golf match to finish."

ON REACHING THE AGE OF 100

"Who am I? I'm not sure any more, except I know I'm not Bing Crosby."

(*That's enough funniest gags of the millenium. Ed.*)



POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Bob Hope, Comedian

So. Farewell
Then
Bob Hope.

Comedian,
Film star
And very
Rich.

Keith's Mum says that
You won World War Two
By entertaining
The troops.

But other historians
Believe that is
Putting it
A bit
Strongly.

E.J. Thribb (aged 117½)

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOLEY
"GOAL!" A NEW FILM BY QUENTIN TARANTINO...
SHUT THE FUCK UP!
RUMOURED TO BE COMING TO NEWCASTLE...
YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP!
SEE QUENTIN YOU WON'T EVEN HAVE TO WRITE A SCRIPT!
HEY COOL, THESE GUYS CAN ACT MAAAN
HAVE SOME OF THIS MOTHERFUCKER!

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

SIR MICHAEL JAGGER

Now that you've reached the age of 90, do spoons still play an important part in your day-to-day life?

Of course. I may have reached the age of 90, but I'm still up there and that means keeping fit. My father, you know, was a world expert on keeping fit and I guess I inherited that from him.

In the Sixties there were quite a lot of stories involving spoons being put to strange uses. Can you tell us about that?

I've always been passionately keen on cricket, man. I was at Lords watching the test match only the other day. What a great place that is, a Mecca you could say, for cricket lovers all over the world.

I gather some pretty special celebrations have been arranged for the Big Nine-O. Will spoons play any part in those?

Yeah, well, man, I gather Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa and a few other cats have organised this party thing at the UN and I'll be expected to sing a few numbers.

You seem to find it quite easy to avoid the subject of spoons. Is that because of some deep childhood trauma?

I may be 90, but I like to be with young people, especially my 14 wives and 79 children. That's why they'll all be with me on the big day. It's great.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

Why don't you call my agent? They know all that kind of shit.

World copyright: Lord Jagger 2003.

NEXT WEEK: Nicola Horlick on 'Me and My Horlicks'.

THE BOOK OF SHARON

Chapter 94

1. And lo, it came to pass that Sharon decreed that a mighty wall should be raised betwixt the lands of the children of Israel and the land of the Arab-ites.

2. And Sharon said: "Let the wall be fourteen cubits high and six cubits thick, so that no Arab-ites or Hamas-ites or Hezboll-ites may ever again cross over into the land of Israel."

3. For Sharon had wearied of the troubles that had been brought upon the children of Israel by the Hamas-ites and the Hezboll-ites and all the other -ites, when they came privily unto the land of Israel and slew both themselves and the Israelites, like even unto Samson.

4. Then did the Israelites go forth to do Sharon's bidding and raise a mighty wall around all the land of the Arab-ites.

5. And they separated fathers and mothers from their children, brother from brother, sister from sister.

6. And the houses of the Arab-ites were left without water to drink nor soil to be tilled.

7. And the orange groves and olive trees were laid waste, and there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth.

8. And the Arab-ites said, one to another: "Woe is us, for this wall of Sharon has made our homes a prison and our land no more than a barren wilderness, where there is no sound in the noonday save the roaring of the bull that is called dozer."

9. But Sharon looked upon his wall and saw that it was good.

10. And to the wailing of the Arab-ites and their women and children, Sharon hardened his heart, saying: "Verily, that which they have asked for, that they have got."

11. Then Sharon journeyed unto the land of Us, even unto the House that is called White, where dwelleth the ruler of that land that is called Dub-ya.

12. And Dub-ya saith unto Sharon: "Behold, I have seen a vision that I am the man, sent by God, to bring peace, that shall be forever between your people and the peoples of the Arab-ites, even the Hamas-ites, the Hezboll-ites and the rest of the -ites that are too numerous to mention."

13. And Dub-ya said unto Sharon: "To this end have I called thee, that thou shouldst give the word that this wall thou hast built must be taken down, brick by brick, so that once again the Arab-ites can go forth into their fields and draw water and eat of the fruit of the pomegranate tree whose seed they have planted and which has borne fruit by their labours, even an hundredfold."

14. And Sharon listened unto Dub-ya with a face that is straight, until Dub-ya had come to the last word of his utterance.

15. And Sharon saith unto him: "I hear what thou sayest, O mighty ruler of Us, but the answer from the children of Israel is that thou must be joking."

16. And so it was that the children of Israel proceeded with the building of the wall of Sharon, even until every last brick of it was in place.

17. And the Arab-ites looked upon Sharon's wall and wept bitterly, for they knew that it would bright them naught but suffering and grief.

18. And the Arab-ites and the Hamas-ites and and Hezboll-ites took counsel among themselves and said: "Let us now rise up privily and discover some new way in which we can seek vengeance on the children of Israel."

19. And so it was that they came back to the square that is called one.

(Here doth not end the lesson that is not learned)

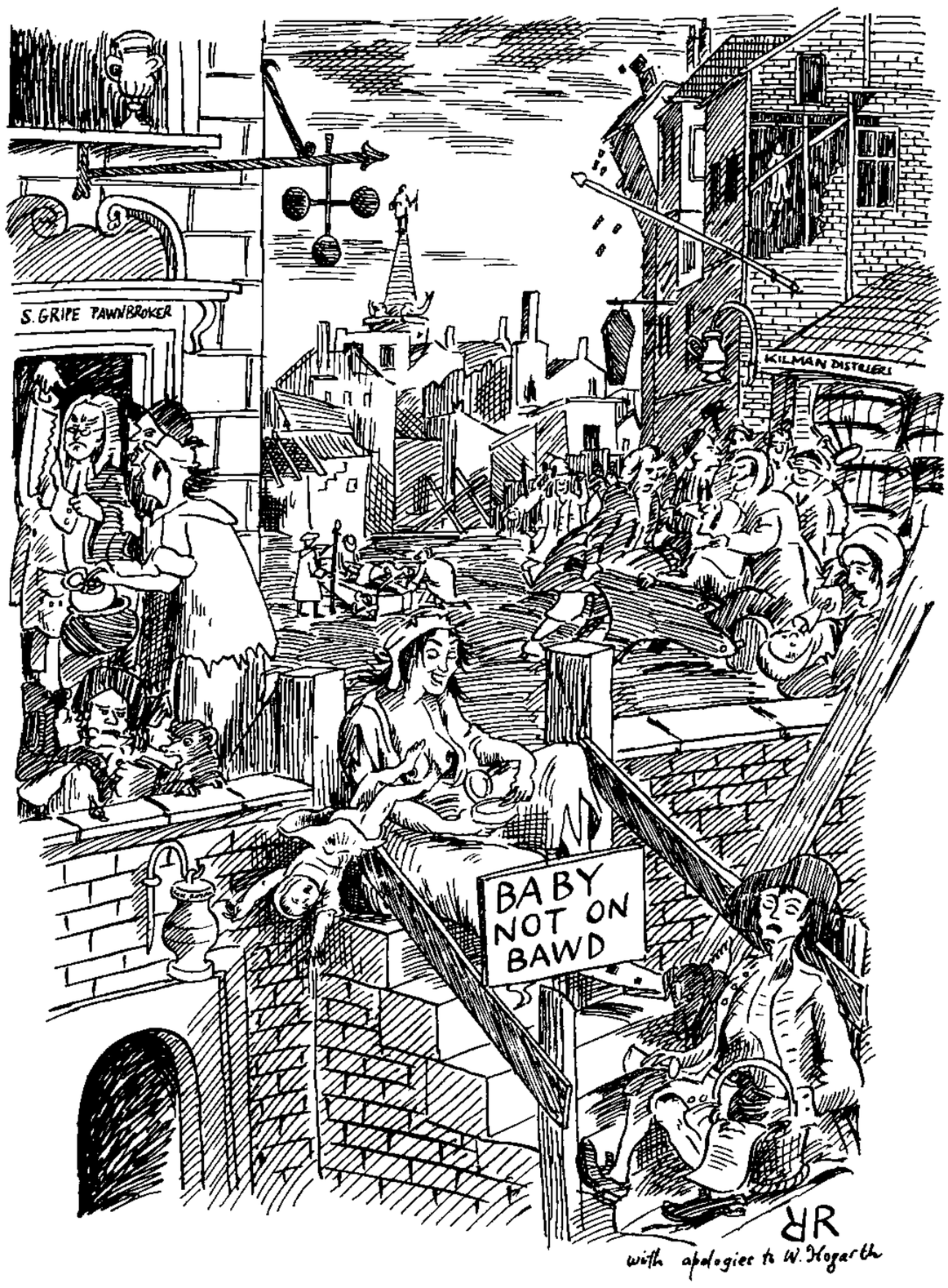
From the Board of Directors of British Jews

Dear Sir,

We have read with outrage the above chapter of the Bible. A clearer example of anti-Semitism it would be hard to find outside the pages of Der Sturmer. *We demand that all copies of this deeply offensive book be withdrawn from sale herewith.*

Yours,
RABBI AMIEL OF CROSSHARBOUR,
c/o The Daily Telegraph

FLY (INTO A RAGE WITH) BRITISH AIRWAYS
THE CHECK-IN LADY ASKED IF I COULD LOAN HER £50 UNTIL WE GET BACK!
SHE ASKED ME IF OUR JOURNEY WAS REALLY NECESSARY!!
DEPARTURES
19.25 ROME... FORGET IT
18.02 NICE... DON'T BOTHER
POLICE
HE'S BEEN DEAD FOR ABOUT A WEEK
HAVE YOU PACKED ANY BOMBS OR BOMB MAKING EQUIPMENT ?
WHEN ARE WE THERE MUM?
YOU'RE WELCOME TO HEATHROW
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE ONLY SERVING BREAD AND WATER!
ALL OUT
WE WERE GOING ON OUR HONEYMOON BUT ENDED UP GETTING DIVORCED INSTEAD.
THEY HADN'T LOST OUR LUGGAGE THEY'D SOLD IT!
HI, I'M ON A TROLLEY
HEATH



C OF E SAYS 'SIN CAN BE WONDERFUL'

by Our Religious Staff **Lunchtime O'Done**

THE Church of England took another step into the 21st Century today when it published a new report entitled *Time To Be Open-Minded About Everything*.

The report, compiled by a number of bishops, argues that the time has come for the Church to move on from its old obsession with the "archaic and obsolete" idea of sin.

What Sin It For Me?

"To young people today," say the bishops, "the whole notion of sin is outside their frame of reference.

"When they are told that Christ died to save the world from sin they just stare in incomprehension."

The bishops argue that activities regarded in past ages as socially unacceptable – the so-called 'Seven Deadly Sins' – can now be seen to be life-enhancing expressions of the right of each individual to form their own value system in responding to the strains inseparable from living in modern society.

"Over the centuries," they say, "a whole lexicon of pejorative language has been developed to demonise certain perfectly healthy human instincts, such as sexuality, or the legitimate expression of righteous anger directed at a partner or colleague."

HOW THE BISHOPS HAVE REDEFINED 'SIN'

LUST: A natural expression of a human instinct common to all personkind.

SLOTH: A perfectly natural expression of the basic human right to reject oppressive societal nouns embodied in the so-called "work ethic".

GLUTTONY: One of the most encouraging developments of recent years has been the much greater appreciation of food and drink, thanks to the influence of such TV chefs as Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson. A modern, outward-looking Church should welcome this.

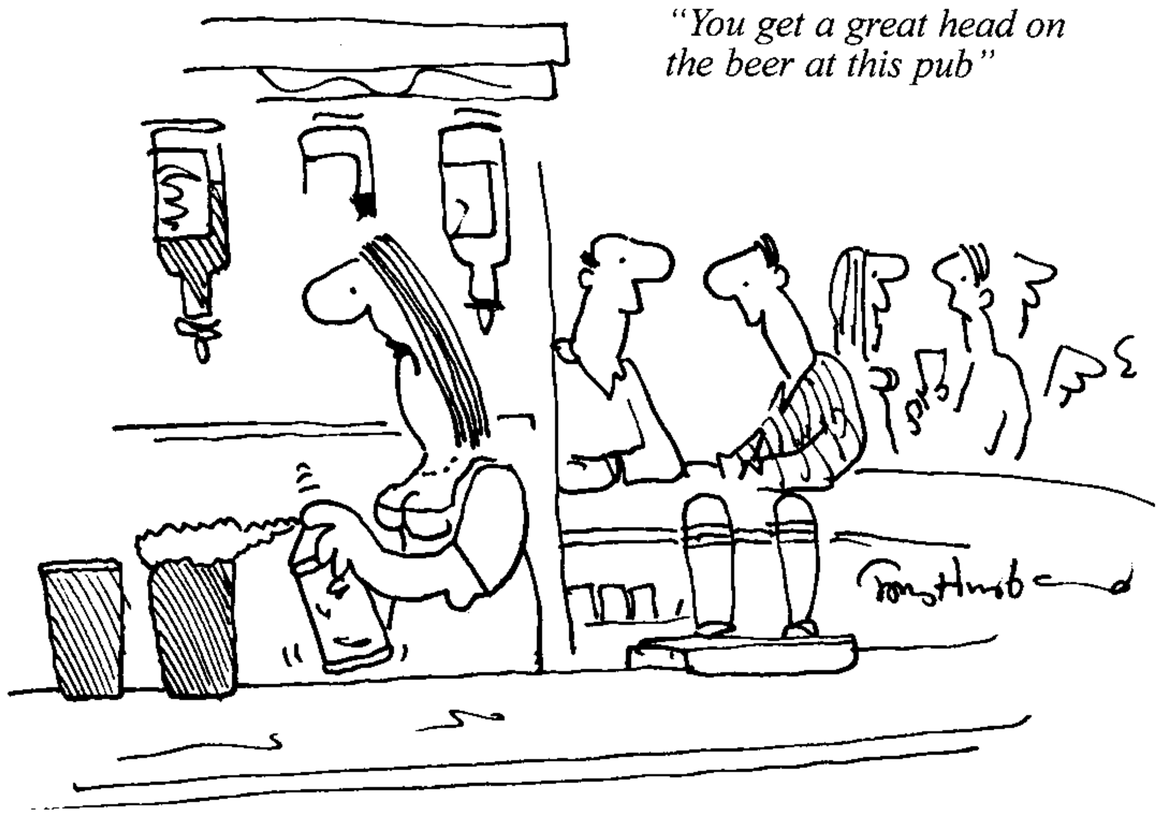
ENVY: It is a mark of how out of touch the Church has been in past ages that it was prepared to demonise the healthy human instinct to wish to share in the benefits enjoyed by better-off members of society.

(That's enough life-enhacing sins. Archbishop Rowan Pelling of the First Church of Christ Sensualist.)

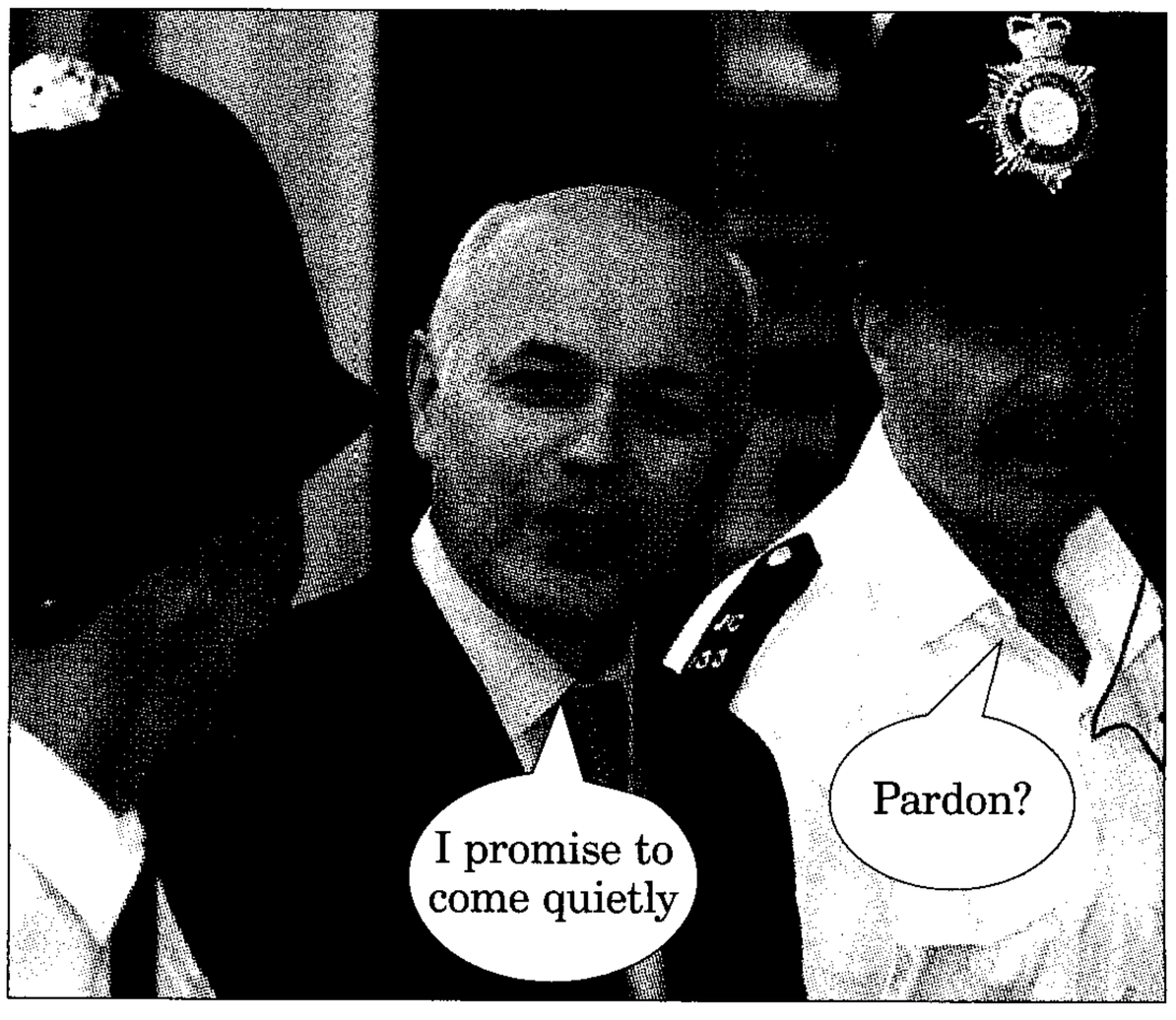
WHAT SADDAM COULD LOOK LIKE NOW

by Our Baghdad Staff

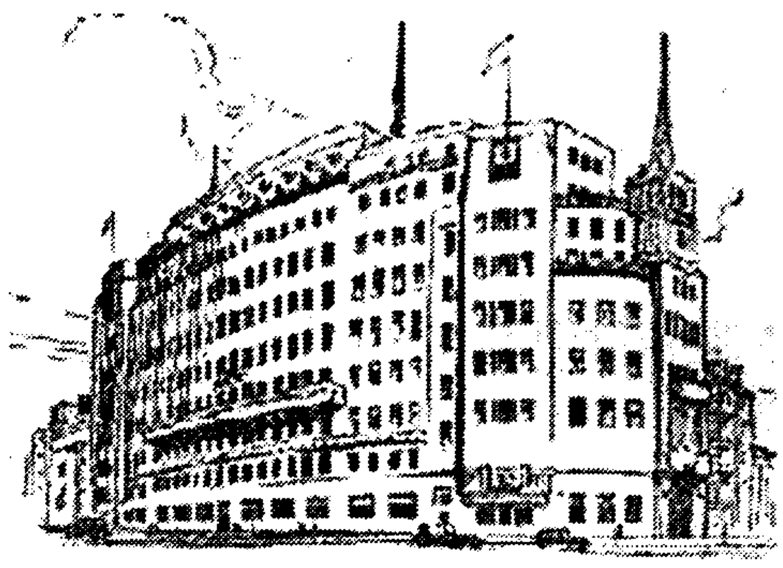
SADDAM HUSSEIN, now on the run from Coalition Forces, is almost certain to have disguised his appearance *(writes **Robert Fishkake**, Our Man In Baghdad)*. Our artist's impression shows how Saddam could have changed with the help of plastic surgery.



DUNCAN COUGH SHOCK



DIARY



THE BBC LETTERS

Stalin's Disciples

From Arthur and Janet Daley

SIR: We work for the BBC. There – we've said it!! We are both regularly invited to act as pundits for the corporation's so-called comment programmes.

Yet it is a well-known fact that we are both as mad as hatters. The very fact that we are invited to represent the so-called "right-wing" point-of-view is proof sufficient of a sinister left-wing bias at the BBC.

After we have been tempted to appear with the promise of money, the war-machine of the BBC gears up to make the two of us look crazier than ever. It is a little-known fact that the make-up department of the BBC is Stalinist to its very core. Prior to major discussion programmes, the two of us emerge from BBC Make-Up dressed in Hitler moustaches and Dracula teeth, our hair "teased" into an upright position to make it look extra scary.

As the floor manager counts down to transmission, we are force-fed "frothing blood capsules". We are then led to a single seat, so that one of us has to sit on the other's lap. While the Dimblebys and Paxmans of this world are introducing us with their customary sneers, a senior producer presses a hidden button, activating a "whoopie cushion" beneath our seats, causing us both considerable embarrassment.

The BBC is at war with democracy. There – we've said it! And the oddest thing of all is that no one seems to mind. But what business has the BBC to be – and I quote – "at war" with anybody? What right has it to maim and torture ordinary civilians – and to bomb innocent women and children? Doubtless, BBC apparatchiks are already being forced by their senior commandants to reply that there is, and I quote, "little or no proof" of mass genocide by the corporation. But as Harold Macmillan once so memorably observed, They would say that, wouldn't they?

A role for Tipsy and Winky

From Barbara Amiel

SIR: We must disinfect the BBC before it poisons our inkwells. Like other nasty viruses, this one requires swift containment. There are three options open to us: a quick once-over with dustpan and brush, a half-hearted wipe with a damp cloth – or a concerted manhunt involving bloodhounds, shot-guns and infra-red cameras.

There are still pockets within the BBC which can be trusted. I have no argument with the Teletubbies. Tipsy, Winky, La-La and Po reflect the highest standards of public service broadcasting. Their reflections on the recent Iraq war were, to my mind, second to none. Common sense dictates that it is time to replace the present batch of card-carrying left-wing ideologue newscasters with this cheery and well-informed selection of brightly-coloured glove puppets.

During the recent war with Iran, the BBC made no bones about being the mouthpiece of Saddam. Media commentators predict that, when the dust has settled, the former dictator will be offered the coveted lunchtime programme on Radio Two – a slot forcibly vacated by Jimmy Young, who is now widely believed to be locked in a lower-basement chamber at Broadcasting House as a punishment for being a favourite of Margaret Thatcher .

And did you see the way the BBC dolled up the photographs of Uday and Qusay Hussein, not only taking them from a most attractive angle, but treating the dastardly brothers to an executive wash-and-brush-up too? Believe me, the BBC's wholesale rehabilitation of Uday and Qusay will not end there. Far from it. Media experts expect them to appear on top-rated entertainment shows Family Fortunes and The Generation Game before the year is out, playing on their deadpan composures to win over hapless studio audiences.

And another thing. The BBC has a reckless disregard for accuracy, coupled with breathtaking ignorance. The BBC mandate is to support war, yet for the past few months we have heard nothing but questions. Lord Leith must be turning in his grave.

Who do they think they are?

From Lord Black of Crossharbour

SIR: The BBC is pathologically hostile to the Government and official opposition, most British institutions, well-polished shoes, American policy in almost every field, stamp-collectors, Israel, moderation in Ireland, lightly boiled new potatoes, the colour mauve, freedom of speech in the Isle of Wight, all Western religions, most odd numbers between 32 and 57, sun-roofs on Ford Escorts, Crunchy Nut Cornflakes, most manifestations of the free market economy and household gadgets of every kind. And it doesn't end there. The BBC is also pathologically paranoid, and I am now referring particularly to those of its staff who persist in hiding in my cupboards. Yes, I know you're there!

Only last week, I witnessed a so-called comedian on the BBC using licence-payers' money to launch into an astonishing attack on his own mother-in-law. When was it ever in the BBC's remit, may I ask, to assassinate old ladies who have led blameless lives?

At this point in time, none of us know the first thing about anything. That is as it should be. There is not the slightest evidence we would have it any other way. It has never been the business of the BBC to provide information on topics about which we, as a country, wish to remain ignorant.

Who killed Dr Kelly? I do not know. But what I do know is that he did not kill himself. We do not know who he spoke to, if anyone, but one thing is for sure. He did not speak to me. That was his big mistake. I would have told him to avoid all journalists. They are interested in only one thing: finding things out and then going round telling everybody. We desperately need a BBC that knows its place, and that place is most definitely not on the radios and televisions of ordinary, decent people.

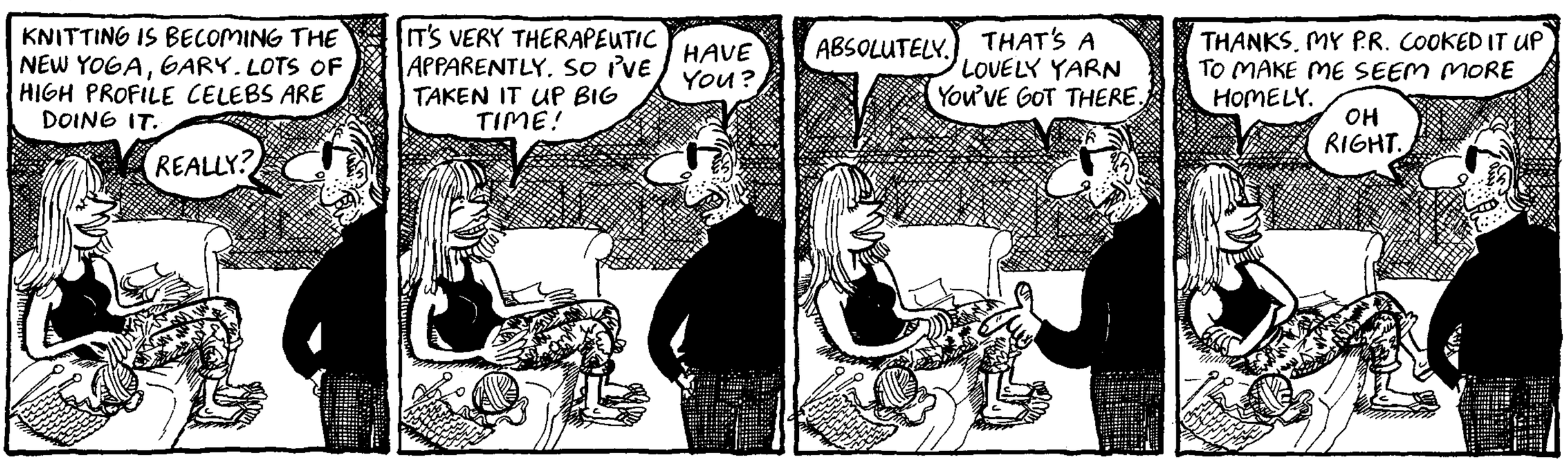
The Prime Minister must use his office to expose the BBC for the broadcasting organisation it has undoubtedly become. Only when the public is made to understand that the BBC is guilty of making regular transmissions on radio and television – beamed into every household at the switch of a button – will they become aware of the terrifying dangers lurking in that singularly brutal organisation. Do I make myself clear?

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

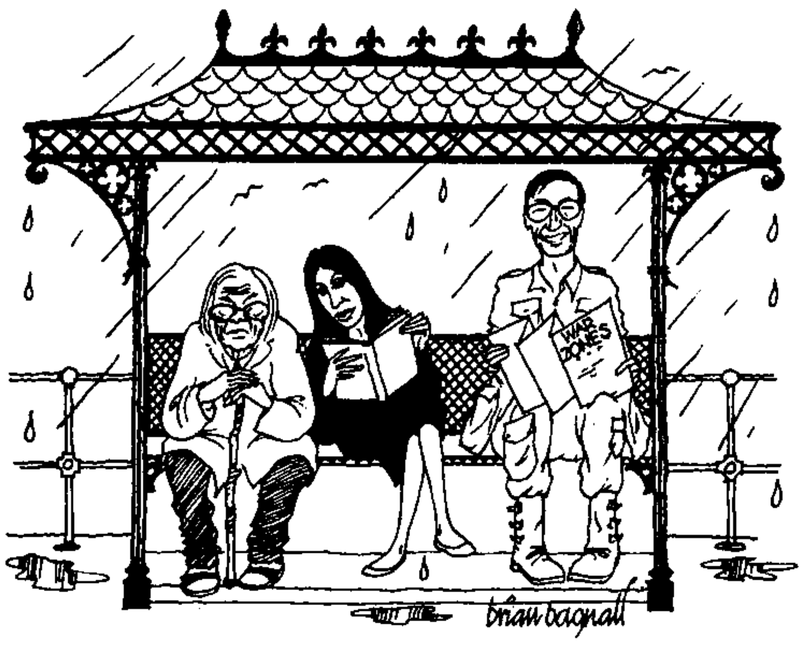
Celeb

LIGGER


KNITTING IS BECOMING THE NEW YOGA, GARY. LOTS OF HIGH PROFILE CELEBS ARE DOING IT.
REALLY?
IT'S VERY THERAPEUTIC APPARENTLY. SO I'VE TAKEN IT UP BIG TIME!
HAVE YOU?
ABSOLUTELY.
THAT'S A LOVELY YARN YOU'VE GOT THERE.
THANKS. MY P.R. COOKED IT UP TO MAKE ME SEEM MORE HOMELY.
OH RIGHT.

Literary Review

Summer reading in the Eye!



Our panel of celebrity critics reveal what they'll be packing for the beach...

Monica Ali
Novelist
I was deeply impressed by Hilary Mantel's highly affecting memoir, *Giving Up The Ghost* (Fourth Estate)

Hilary Mantel
Novelist
I was deeply impressed by Monica Ali's highly affecting novel, *Brick Lane* (Transworld)

Michael Foot
Author and politician
The best modern biography of a socialist politician ever written is Professor Harold Snargs' *Weems: Labour Titan* (Spart Press £49.99), a punctilious study of Attlee's sadly forgotten shadow agriculture and fisheries minister Reg Weems. So resonant is Snargs' account of the 1935 Labour party conference, at which Weems successfully proposed a revision of Clause IV B paragraphs i–iii of the party's constitution, that it was almost possible to believe one was there, which on reflection I probably was.

Alain de Botton
Writer and philospher
I've discovered this jolly interesting chap called La Rouchefoucauld – a French johnnie I should imagine – who's written this fascinating little book called *Maxims*. All sorts of one-liners about love and friendship and stuff like that which really make you think and should be just the thing for my new one, *What I Found in the Penguin Classics Library*. Oh, and a wonderful new novel, the Chinese writer Hoo Hee's deeply sensitive account of his upbringing in Mao-era Sechzuan, *Cranes Fly South Over The Grave of My Capitalist Running Dog Aunt* (Obscuro Press, £19.99).

Zoe Heller
Journalist
This year I'd thought I'd give Franzie Kafka's *Metamorphosis* a spin. People seem to think he's quite a dude and a brainy girl such as myself can never read too many books. Far out!

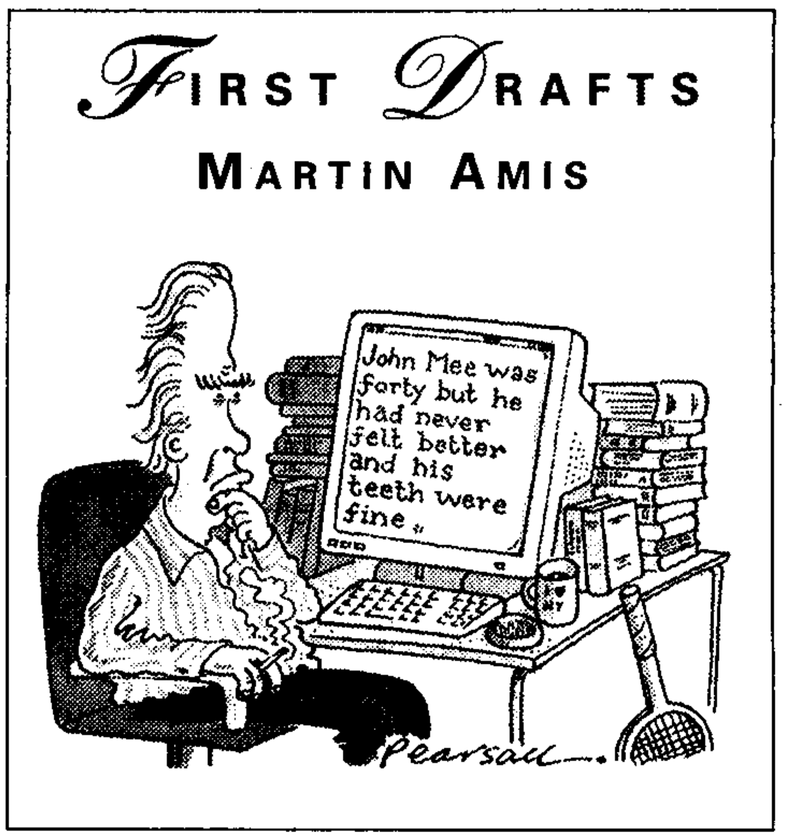
Max Hastings
Journalist
As a former head keeper to the Earl of Killiecrankie, Hector McTavish brings a thoroughly informed intelligence to his *Memoirs of a Kenspeckle Lad: With Rod and Line Through Argyllshire* (privately printed, Snobbe Press £100). I was particularly impressed by his account of a salmon taken from a tributary of the Blackadder using not the regulation three twisted horsehairs but a fly composed of four sauted midges, the cherry from a Mr Kipling bakewell tart and...[*continues*]

D.J. Taylor
Novelist and critic
The little-known Victorian novelist Stultitia Blodwyn, whose epic work *Offal* (1894) may have been mentioned in a letter by Mr Gladstone, has been crying out for a biography. Professor Lance Fotheringay's long-meditated *Stultitia: Sweet Mistress of the Pen* (University of Neasden Press, £80) offers a stirring sketch of the woman of whom Thackeray once remarked "By God, I suppose I would read Miss Blodwyn's latest, were there naught else to hand", establishing, among other things, the remarkable fact that she probably did *not* speak to Dickens at a party held by the Duchess of Devonshire in 1869.

Professor Richard Dawkins
Atheist
The celebrated American rationalist scholar Agatha Moomin III's *Chuck it God, You're All Washed Up* (Rant Books £3.99) is a devastating critique of the deceits practised on brainwashed humanity by the CIA-funded bosses of organised religion. By contrasting the myth of theistical beneficence with her own judicious model of tolerant liberal humanism, Ms Moomin proves beyond doubt that these stupid God-bothering deviants should be strung up by their ankles, boiled in oil and... [*continues*]

Paul Bailey
Novelist and critic
I was inexpressibly moved by *Bottoms Up Dearie!* Ned Winky's poignant memoir of the Soho legend Barry Mascara (Simper Press £18.99), simultaneously a cogent account of the life of a man who combined a job as a long-distance lorry driver ("picking things up on the M1 darling" as he so wittily put it) with a nocturnal existence as a Meard Street nightclub hostess ("Put it away love," he is once supposed to have told Noel Coward, "you'll get us all arrested") and a searing demonstration of the lifelong prejudice with which so many of us have had to contend.

Will Hutton
Economic commentator
Zigismund Dull's *Squaring the Triangle: Coping with Global Transformation in an Age of Chaos* (Tender & Mainprice £300) argues convincingly that what modern consumers want is "deep" analyses of the contemporary financial landscape written by personable ex-*Observer* editors such as myself.



More about me

Thinly Disguised Autobiography
James Delingpole
(*Picador, £12.99*)

BLAME Tony Parsons. Now every gobby journalist in London is writing a novel, and publishers are queuing up to buy them, whether or not they are any good, as Parsons has broken that particular mould with his astoundingly poor bestsellers.

Removing that all-important quality threshhold has made novel-writing accessible to anyone with an ego to match, and few can match the ego of James Delingpole. Long-suffering readers of The Spectator know him for his experimentally solipsistic TV reviews, in which he witters on endlessly about his own life, only ever turning on the TV if there's a documentary about World War II on.

For the Sunday Telegraph he writes wilfully obscure rock reviews, which poor Dominic Lawson thinks are at the cutting edge and no one else reads at all. But Delingpole really gets into his stride when occasionally allowed to write a feature article, because whatever the apparent subject of the article is, he always writes about himself. His muse. His inspiration. His one true love. And to get paid for it as well... few of us can know such exquisite joy.

So for Delingpole to call his third novel Thinly Disguised Autobiography is strikingly apt. His previous novel, Fin, could easily have been called Finly Disguised Autobiography. Other novelists hold up a mirror to life; Delingpole holds one up to himself. His hero Josh Devereux – a shame he didn't choose "Dolingpile" or "Dalingpule" – is a weedy, self-satisfied little chap who goes up to Oxford in the mid-1980s and then becomes a journalist.

Things that happened to Delingpole happen to Dalingpule – at least, one assumes they happened to Delingpole, because they are not quite as interesting or entertaining as fictional events need to be. Names have been changed and details presumably tweaked a little, but there's no plot as such, merely a long sequence of unconnected anecdotes. So there's a lot about people getting drunk and smoking dope at Oxford, six whole pages on an unusually humiliating tutorial (or "tute", as Dalingpule calls it, to annoy all readers who didn't go to Oxford, and all readers who did), vast deserts of faux-witty dialogue, some dull stuff about the club scene of the late 1980s and some even duller stuff about the Glastonbury Festival. In between these japes Dalingpule worries about being cool, sucks up to poshos and masturbates unstoppably. Much as Delingpole does in The Spectator each week, as it happens.

And it's all rendered in his distinctively artless prose – all 440 agonising pages of it. Most novelists polish their sentences until they gleam. Delingpole, you suspect, looks at a sentence he has written and merely the fact that he has written it makes it all right. In The Spectator of Petsy Wyatt and Deborah Ross, where people write not to inform but to show off, this just about makes sense. The thousands of sentences in Thinly Disguised Autobiography are less forgiving.

Delingpole, being uninterested in other people, has chosen internal monologue as his literary form. But there's no subtext, no sense that he has developed in any way or learned anything, nothing internal at all in fact. Just monologue. If you thought Proust was tough to read, try Delingpole.

Picador won't be too worried. As Tony Parsons and, more recently, Allison Pearson have shown, it doesn't matter how pitiful your book is so long as you can puff it relentlessly in newspapers and magazines. Delingpole's campaign began with 1,500 words in The Spectator about how talented he is, and hasn't stopped yet. Only we who buy and who read books can stop him, and we must surely try.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ WITH nearly a month remaining until the release of Martin Amis's new novel *Yellow Dog* (Cape, 4 September), book trade observers have been mightily amused by the increasingly bizarre behaviour of Amis's agent Andrew "The Jackal" Wylie (see *Eyes passim*).

So alarmed has Wylie become at the prospect of the contents of this highly important work being leaked to newspapers in advance of publication that, as well as insisting on the usual embargos, this legendarily predatory operator has apparently been trying to force individual employees of Random House, Amis's publishers, to sign letters signifying their acceptance of the Wylie diktat.

Given that proof copies of *Yellow Dog* can already be obtained from internet dealers, this seems a particularly futile attempt to close the stable doors after the horse has bolted.

For those unable to contain their excitement at the thought of Mart's first proper novel in eight years, Bookworm can exclusively reveal that *Yellow Dog* has a three-strand plot featuring an actor-writer named Xan Meo who gets hit on the head by one of his dad's old criminal associates, a "high IQ moron" named, er, Clint Smoker who works for a down-market tabloid called the *Morning Lark*, and some witty satire on the royal family starring "King Henry IX".

The royal honcho, whose two chief flunkies are called "Bugger" and "Lover", is married to "Queen Pamela", currently in a long-term coma after tumbling from her horse, and is much exercised by the existence of a blackmailer's VCR showing his teenage daughter Princess Victoria in the bath.

Need I go on? Mart does to the extent of 340 pages. Expect a sheaf of dramatically early reviews courtesy of the nation's understandably peeved literary editors.

■ *HELL*, the first volume of Jeffrey Archer's Prison Diary, was dedicated to the various "foul-weather friends" who had stuck by him in his hour of need. Volume II – *Purgatory*, released last week alongside his lordship himself, is more specific: it bears the inscription "To Mary – The Thousandth Woman".

Rather than a comment on exactly how many mistresses he managed to keep going during their marriage, this is a reference to his favourite Kipling poem *The Thousandth Man* – who "will stand your friend / With the whole round world agin you" – which is printed alongside the dedication.

But *The Thousandth Woman* is also the title of a 1913 novel by E.W. Hornung, creator of Raffles, the gentleman thief, and an author who has been anthologised alongside Archer in the past.

The Thousandth Woman of Hornung's novel – which also features the Kipling poem – is Blanche Macnair, "one of the gentlest and best God ever made", who swears to aid Scruton, a man who has been falsely imprisoned for a "gigantic swindle" which "beggared everybody all around except himself". Even when she realises that her sweetheart has claimed a false alibi for the night that the real swindler was murdered and was really at the scene, Blanche does not lose faith. "'There won't be another case', she heard herself saying... 'It'll never come out – I know it won't'."

Unfortunately for Jeffrey, art imitates reality in one other rather important way: despite Scruton's threat to "start a libel action", in one final twist it emerges that he was guilty as hell throughout.

■ EVEN though the honour of publishing his work has now passed to Macmillan, Lord Archole retains a presence on the HarperCollins website.

The disgraced peer's biography on the British version of the site contains no reference to his recent incarceration, but the Australian edition adds that "he is currently researching his next novel in a London prison".

Apart from getting the location of his most recent alma mater wrong, there is, curiously, no mention of the means by which he gained access to this particular "research institution". Could a Harpic person in Sydney be taking the piss?

'Bookworm'

THERE'S old Phil LARKIN trying to look cool in his Buddy Holly glasses...
CRIPES! I thought he WAS trying to look like ERIC MORECAMBE...

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

Those Philip Larkin TV drama documentaries...

Spartan Hull interior. Camera pauses to linger over letter face-up on table which reads 'How are you, you old shag? Isn't life boring? Read any good porn recently? Young Martin's being a right pain. Yours Kingers'. Woman wearing a curious orange wig sits in chair. Enter bald man with spectacles bearing very faint resemblance to Larkin carrying plastic bag.

MAN: I've just been down to the off-licence for some more booze. Christ, do you know there are niggers all over the place? [*continues*]

Pseuds Corner

It seems to me that the austerity simply displays another level of translucence... [there follows a piece by J.S. Bach]... On reflection, 'refraction' is probably a better word than 'translucence'.

MICHAEL BERKELEY
'Private Passions', BBC Radio Three

Since spotting my first few Banksies, I have been desperately seeking out more. When I do come across them, surreptitiously peeping out of an alley or boldy [sic] emblazoned on a wall, I find it hard to contain myself. They feel personal, as if they are just for me, and they feel public as if they are a gift for everyone. They make me smile and feel optimistic about the possibilities of shared dreams and common ownership.

SIMON HATTENSTONE on the Shoreditch grafitti artist 'Banksy',
Guardian

Redcity is a sublimate-stick-theatre, derived from an original text diffusing the individual's path as a city-stimuli-receiver. The text forms the blueprint for a three point objective-narrative which describes a 'parole' where 'we start nowhere, go nowhere, and return nowhere' [continues]

Advertisement for event at the Waygood gallery and studios, Newcastle

The degree of pride I felt making this purchase [a pair of Petit Bateau children's pants] was quite overwhelming. That a daughter of mine should have underwear from Paris was thrilling enough, but more important was the fact that the pants themselves – like baby shorts with lightly frilled edges – seemed to belong to a world that was so ordered and carefree, one where nothing could go wrong. Suddenly they symbolised the kind of childhood I want Mary to have, that every child should have – and before I knew it, there were tears in my eyes.

SUSIE BOYT
Financial Times

Every generation since the war has had its great pop cultural moment, thanks to teddy boys, hippies, punks and onwards to those of us who called it 'acieeeeed'. But as my friend Ben said to me the other day, my generation has struck lucky again. 'In years to come people will look back, and say to us, "I can't believe you watched every minute of all first four series of Big Brother!"' And these would be words spoken enviously.

CASPAR LLEWELLYN SMITH
Observer

The shape, the efficiency... the simplicity of a bike is really the endpoint of Cartesian perfection.

ZOE WILLIAMS

Pseuds Corporate

Guardian

The days of the sheepskin-coated salesman are long gone. Today's Toyota dealers don't just sell cars, they provide a complete ownership experience.

From *Infront*, the Toyota magazine

For us, orange isn't just a colour, it's a way of life. Being orange comes from the inside out, not the outside in.

SARAH TAYLOR, Orange media relations manager, quoted in BA *Businesslife* magazine

CONTRIBUTORS: William McHugh, Laurence Neville, Gill Rusiecki, Ian Zant-Boer, E.D.J. Hay, Dr Alex Peach, Tim Hardman, Ian Matthews.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

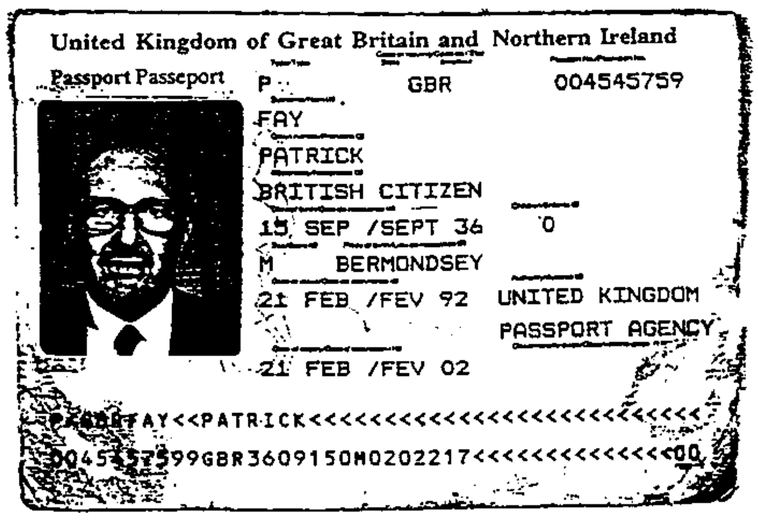
MI6 hits Rock bottom again

PUBLICITY surrounding the embarrassing collapse last week, at the cost of an estimated £25m, of a five-year attempt to bring to trial alleged major drug money launderers caught by a Scotland Yard "sting" operation, concentrated on the judge's criticism of police methods and "state-created crime".

It undoubtedly came as a relief to the foreign office and MI6 that Judge Bathurst-Norman made no reference to the key role played in the "sting" during the early 90s by the "spooks" who were then looking for compromising information about the government of Gibraltar which could make it more amenable to a settlement with Spain.

But Spanish court records obtained by *Private Eye* suggest that fugitive British gangster Joe Wilkins was not only the Yard's, but also MI6's secret weapon in an undercover operation by the foreign office to undermine the Gibraltar chief minister Joe Bossano. By a strange coincidence a "London gangland source" informed the *Sun* last weekend that Wilkins died of cancer on Wednesday, two days after the trial's collapse.

Wilkins, who was a Soho vice boss turned drug trafficker, claimed to Spanish police that in return for his help he was given a false UK passport in the name of John Patrick Fay by the British authorities while he was on the run. That passport was issued in February 1992, one month after he absconded from a British prison where he was serving a 10-year sentence for importing £1.5m of cannabis from Spain.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In return for his help in obtaining dirt on leading political and legal figures in Gibraltar, Wilkins was still allowed to continue his criminal enterprises – tobacco smuggling, money laundering and fraud – from a £400,000 penthouse on the Costa del Sol.

Wilkins was officially named as a police informer in the judgment at Southwark crown court. His murky dealings in Spain with two undercover Yard officers in part forced the trial judge to acquit eight defendants of money laundering after five years of legal arguments.

But Wilkins' role as an MI6 "asset" was not mentioned. A record 256 days of secret hearings over public interest immunity (PII) applications made by the prosecution to withhold evidence from the defence helped see to that. Many of the PII hearings related to Wilkins.

The mysterious disappearance of tapes and notebooks regarding the initial contacts between the undercover police officers and Wilkins further ensured the Teflon gangster's role was obscured.

The Spanish court records of his interrogation in 1996 are the only public evidence of Wilkins' role in the dirty tricks aimed at the Gibraltar government.

Judge Bathurst-Norman ruled that the main defendant – Gibraltar defence lawyer Christopher Finch – had been "entrapped" by the police. As first revealed by the *Eye* in April 2000, the Met had set up a money-laundering operation from plush Mayfair offices which handled £15m of dirty money. Operation Cotton ran from July 1991 until August 1998 when Finch was arrested. Tapes involving the crucial 1993 initial meetings between Finch and the undercover detectives have also disappeared.

The police told the court that Wilkins was first introduced to the undercover officers in September 1993. Just who made the introductions is in the missing tapes and notebooks. The court was told the gangster's main police contact was a Scotland Yard commander. Wilkins was by then already on the run with his false British passport.

The judge said there was "no conspiracy" by the police, home office or prison service to allow Wilkins to escape. He absconded while on an unaccompanied visit to the dentist. Defence lawyers believe MI6 engineered Wilkins' escape and his new identity specifically to assist the operation against Bossano.

In September 1996 Spanish drug squad officers arrested Wilkins in Estepona for money laundering after he left the local Nat West bank with £50,000 cash. Unknown to MI6 or Scotland Yard, Spanish police were cooperating with the US drug enforcement administration (DEA). A "Patrick Fay" account had been used to launder $1m for a wanted US drug trafficker, John Knock.

Spanish police were bemused to learn that the British had issued no international arrest warrant for Wilkins.

In his signed interrogation by a Spanish magistrate, Wilkins said the "British police" had given him the false passport "to investigate a drug trafficking organisation in Spain". More explosively, he revealed that he had also used it "to obtain evidence" against the then Gibraltar attorney-general John Blackburn Gittings.

Wilkins told the Spanish magistrate he could prove he was a police informer because there was "a tape" of his conversations with British police officers. These are among the tapes which the police say have been "lost".

Blackburn Gittings says in a statement to defence lawyers that he had been warned against Finch – unpopular in Gibraltar after he represented the families of the three IRA members killed in 1988 by the SAS. He also acted for eyewitness Carmen Proetta. Wilkins was paid £2,000 to give evidence for the *Sunday Times* in a successful libel action brought by Proetta which was settled.

In 1994 Blackburn Gittings says he was tipped off about the MI6 operation against him. He was falsely accused of associating with Wilkins and Knock. Blackburn Gittings agreed to resign but forced the foreign office to withdraw the allegations and pay him £100,000. He is now a high court judge in Botswana.

Blackburn Gittings says he believes the foreign office and MI6 used Wilkins to discredit him because he had refused to toe Whitehall's line against Bossano. In particular over legal advice he gave not to prosecute ministers for corruption.

Gibraltar police also uncovered an attempt to bug the attorney-general's telephone line. The operation was run as a freelance venture by an investigator hired by former MI6 officer Michael Oatley who was at that time working for corporate investigators Kroll Associates.

Wilkins thought the Spanish police were aware of his deal with MI6 and Scotland Yard. In fact both were operating without proper authority in Spain and Gibraltar. In last week's ruling the judge said that the Gibraltar government had been "wholly misled".

Between 1996 and 1997 the Spanish courts sought guidance from Madrid about what to do with Wilkins who was allowed bail. In May 1997 the money-laundering charges were curiously reduced to falsification of documents and the whole matter stayed but left on the file.

According to Wilkins' lawyers, even the false passport was returned as "authentic" and the fugitive was released. Britain has not since made any request for Wilkins' extradition.

Wilkins did not entirely escape retribution. He was badly beaten up in 2000 after news of his work as an informer reached the British criminal fraternity on the Costa del Crime. North London's notorious A-Team, the Adams crime family, were said to be behind the attack. Patrick Adams is also a Costa resident.

Wilkins admitted to knowing the undercover Yard officer and Finch. He confirmed to the *Eye* in 2000 that he had signed the Spanish interrogation in both his names but denied he was a "grass". "To be honest I was punchy when I was in (the Estepona police station), you'll say anything".

Solicitor Paul Butcher of London lawyers BSB, who acted for one of the defendants, says there should be an inquiry into the role of Wilkins and MI6, the "lost" police evidence and the use of PII hearings to hide the unlawful nature of Operation Cotton. "The Crown at first circumvented the PII system, then misused it and in so doing misled the judge," he says.

REBUILDING IRAQ

Allum in the family

BRITS hoping for big reconstruction jobs from grateful US allies have so far been disappointed by the slim pickings, as the Americans award almost all the juicy contracts to... the Americans. But a few well-connected British firms have bucked the trend.

Tony Allum

Engineering company Halcrow won a precious subcontract from Bechtel helping dredge the port at Umm Qasr and surveying damaged motorway bridges. Coincidentally, Halcrow's chairman Tony Allum was also head of the government's "industry working group on Iraq", and went to Washington with trade minister Baroness Symons in May to meet US government and Bechtel officials. Allum gave the Bechtel bosses a "select list" of 18 UK firms considered top candidates for Iraq work – including his own firm, Halcrow. Soon afterwards, Halcrow won the contract.

Halcrow's spokesman told the *Eye* that there "is categorically no link between Tony Allum's position with the Iraq Industry Working Group and our winning work with Bechtel". The spokesman added that his firm won work through skill and specialist knowledge, and that its other Iraq contracts were also unrelated to Allum's work for the DTI.

While Iraqi disorder holds up reconstruction contracts, it creates an opening for British-based private military companies such as Olive Security, which won a contract to supply ex-special forces men to guard Bechtel's staff. Coincidentally, Olive Security's director and co-owner, Jonathan Allum, is the son of Halcrow's Tony Allum.

Olive Security manager Harry Legge-Bourke, a former aide-de-camp to chief of defence staff Sir Charles Guthrie, told the *Eye* there was no link between his firm winning the contract and the fact that Tony Allum is Jonathan's father. "Allum [Sr] and Allum [Jr] can't be seen to be talking together on business contracts and I know for a fact they haven't."

Legge-Bourke, a skiing partner of Prince William whose sister Tiggy was nanny to the royal children, added that although Olive Security was "relatively new on the block", the company had overcome "doubt about our capabilities" and proved that it could "play with the big boys".

Talking of big boys, we have further news of that influential American hawk James Woolsey, former CIA chief and member of Donald Rumsfeld's defence advisory board. Back in April (*Eye* 1078) we revealed that Woolsey was also a vice-president at consultants Booz Allen Hamilton, heading the firm's "Global Strategic Security Practice", which was created to chase "war on terror" contracts. Lo and behold, the US government has now invited Booz Allen to bid for a contract to privatise Iraq's large state-run sector, selling off around a hundred firms – without consulting any Iraqi political institution.

Publish and be damned cheeky

WITH a foreword by John Prescott, the Queen's crest printed inside and a title like *Public Service Review: Central Government*, anyone might think such a glossy publication was a government-produced report.

In fact it's nothing of the sort. It's a public sector ad-mag produced by a firm under investigation over allegations that it misled advertisers and readers. Nevertheless, some government departments are still cooperating with the firm.

PSCA International (formerly the Public Service Communications Agency) runs a stable of magazines including *Public Service Review: Home Office*, *PSR: Central Government*, *PSR: PFI/PPP*, *Freight Transport Review* and *Defence Management Journal*, distributed to high-ranking civil servants and companies involved in public sector procurement.

The publisher persuaded high profile figures, including Tony Blair, John Prescott and other ministers, to write forewords (or have their advisers do it for them) for the various publications. Where ministers have refused to provide opening letters, PSCA has used its imagination. Several of the forewords, presented with smiling ministerial photograph and departmental logo alongside, turn out to be speeches which could easily have been cut-and-pasted from the internet.

A spokeswoman from the Scottish Executive said: "Last year PSCA published a number of 'articles' by Scottish Executive ministers which had neither been solicited from, nor written by, our ministers. They appeared to have been put together from ministerial speeches available on our website or the Scottish parliament website. We continue to monitor very closely any approaches from outside publications looking for editorial content from our ministers."

Meanwhile a home office spokesman told the *Eye*: "I can at this stage confirm that we have requested independent audited evidence of circulation/readership figures for previous publications and that until this is provided to our satisfaction we are not considering their requests that we provide articles for their publication. Steps have been taken to ensure that key people are aware that *Public Service Review: Home Office* is not produced, sponsored or endorsed by the department."

Demonstrating a certain lack of joined up government, despite unhappiness with PSCA in Scotland, and home office, the office of the deputy prime minister and cabinet office have continued to provide ministerial content.

PSCA was forced into a change of name earlier this year after Companies House concluded that the agency name was "so misleading an indication of the nature of its activities as to be likely to cause harm to the public" and likely to make both readers and advertisers believe it was a government agency and the magazines officially sanctioned.

The home office also revealed that there had been correspondence between the publishers and HMSO over several issues including Crown copyright and the use of the word "agency" in their trading title. A further complaint against the firm is that it gave misleading information on distribution figures to some advertisers, who believed each publication had a distribution of 16,000. It's not hard to see why. Last year the website was claiming: "The above publications have different audiences and thus different readerships but all have an approximate distribution of 16,000 copies and a readership of about 20,000."

PSCA sales director Gordon Warrender said the firm had "certainly never claimed all our publications have distributions of 16,000." So what about the website claim then? "Oh, that was a mistake."

He said it would be "a minority of articles" that were taken from public sources, but added: "I would be very surprised if any minister had actually written anything", suggesting ministerial contributions were all written by the press offices.

This makes something of a mockery of PSCA's website, which proclaims: "Other contributors include" and names 12 government ministers.

BNFL

Quayle's egg on face?

J. DANFORTH Quayle is remembered in Britain, if at all, as the American vice-president who couldn't spell "potato". But British Nuclear Fuels clearly thinks highly of old spud-brain: it has hired him as a lobbyist.

The *Eye* discovered the contract among files kept at the US Congress, which record that Quayle & Associates (a firm set up last summer) started lobbying in Washington on behalf of British Nuclear Fuels in April 2003.

This could prove awkward for BNFL, which is still a publicly-owned company. When MPs recently discovered that it was giving cash directly to George Bush's Republican party, the resulting furore caused BNFL to suspend the payments. So should it now be giving taxpayers' money to a former Republican vice-president?

The initial reply from BNFL to our question was that it seemed "a bit tenuous". Not so. Quayle may be a laughing stock in Europe, but he is a significant figure in Washington: having been Veep to Bush snr ensures access to Bush jnr, as many staff worked for both father and son. Quayle sits on the defence policy board and has a place at the Hudson Institute, an influential right-wing think tank.

And BNFL needs all the influential friends it can get, since both of the companies through which it does business in America – BNFL Inc, and its wholly-owned subsidiary Westinghouse – have had a few problems lately.

In February the US department of energy announced that it would fine BNFL Inc $123,750 for safety violations on a clean-up job at an old nuclear site in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Investigators found "numerous violations of the nuclear safety requirements" and expressed particular concern at "the repetitive nature of the types of nuclear safety compliance violations seen in the three tube bundle fires that have occurred in the last 2.5 years". They noted that although "multiple opportunities existed for BNFL to correct known deficiencies with its work practices over the past 2.5 years", the firm had lamentably failed to do so.

Dan Quayle

The tubes mentioned by the inspectors come from an old enrichment plant once used to make atom bombs. BNFL has repeated problems with these tubes catching fire: in 2001 it was fined $41,250 for another "tube bundle fire". Weeks after the most recent fine, BNFL staff were evacuated from the site because of an electrical fire. No wonder BNFL's annual results, published last month, included "£175 million provisions against two nuclear clean up contracts in the US".

The accounts also revealed that BNFL made a pre-tax loss of £1.09 *billion* last year. The board put a brave face on these woeful results, cheerfully insisting that the company "still had a viable future", particularly in the American nuclear market. With super soaraway Dan Quayle on the payroll, who can doubt it?

HALLIBURTON

Privatisation on parade

HALLIBURTON, the firm formerly run by American vice-president Dick Cheney – swallows up more and more of the British army. The ministry of defence (MoD) has confirmed that part-time soldiers hired by Halliburton may well be driving British tanks around Iraq by the end of the year.

Halliburton owns 40 or so tank-transporting lorries and crew, which it leases to the army by the day, under the "heavy equipment transporter" private finance initiative (PFI). Halliburton's drivers are "sponsored reserves": employees of the private firm who will put on uniform and become soldiers should they be caught up in a war zone.

At the moment British tanks are driven around Iraq on the back of ageing Scammell trucks (when they are not moving on their own caterpillar tracks). Halliburton's tank transporters went into service in July, and the company told the *Eye* that "in theory, yes" they could see service in Iraq. The MoD was more positive, saying that "the heavy equipment transporters are likely to go out there by the end of the year, assuming there is still an operational requirement in Iraq".

The deployment comes on top of the announcement that Halliburton is the government's "preferred bidder" for a £4bn contract to run the army's barracks at Aldershot. This win for Cheney's old firm got some publicity – unlike "Project Aquatrine", a £2.9bn scheme to deal with the army's water and sewage. (Perhaps shovelling soldiers' shit was not thought to be newsworthy.) Halliburton's consortium won the Aquatrine contract shortly after armed forces minister Adam Ingram went to a Brussels military privatisation conference (featuring "champagne brainstorming roundtables" and a "Belgian beer tasting evening") accompanied by seven top MoD officials and Halliburton manager Peter Smart.

As the company becomes ever more closely entwined with the MoD, it is worth asking: is Halliburton any good? Next month the Commons public accounts committee will report on Halliburton's performance running Britain's nuclear submarine docks at Devonport. In evidence to the committee, MoD permanent secretary Sir Kevin Tebbit admitted that he had originally been nervous about privatising the dockyards. "What changed our judgement about the consortium's ability to deliver this project was the arrival of Brown & Root [Halliburton's subsidiary] on the project." This confidence was misplaced: the firm doubled its costs to almost a billion pounds.

The national audit office (NAO) found that the MoD's "legal advice was that, if the matter had gone to court, the argument was very much in the department's favour, and the department had very good prospects for defeating DML's [Halliburton's consortium] claim". The MoD did not go to court, however, because Halliburton was holding Britain's nuclear deterrent hostage.

In the audit office's words, "because of the importance of these facilities to the maintenance of the effectiveness of the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent, the department could not accept the contracts failure and the resulting late delivery of the facilities". Or, as Sir Kevin Tebbit put it, a successful court victory would be a "pyrrhic victory": he believed Halliburton would let its subsidiary go bust, disabling Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, rather than abandon the extra millions of taxpayers' money.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

SO THE Financial Services Authority is finally to address that long-running stock market mystery – the real owners of the one-time largest stake in Chelsea Village – now that it doesn't matter. No wonder combative Chelsea chairman Ken Bates referred to the FSA as "worms" having dubbed the Takeover Panel "plonkers".

CV and its Premiership club are now part of Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich's empire and Bates is now £17.5m better off. Its hidden offshore owners are also £12m richer. So what's the point? Especially as CV's mystery investors had already realised maybe £25m or more since it was allowed to float in 1996 when they owned two-thirds of the soccer club? That was the time for City regulators to ask the tough questions.

Presumably even the FSA found it too much that Bates was able to deliver to Abramovich the 50% he demanded if he was to bid and end a looming financial crisis. They may also have been more than puzzled by the fact that these supposedly unconnected offshore holders, with one exception, received their cash from Abramovich via the same account at the Co-Operative Bank in Manchester – the Co-Op Bank have long been bankers to Chelsea and close to Bates.

Bates personally controlled just under 30%. So how was it that eight other supposedly unconnected shareholders could be rounded up so quickly to agree the 35p a share bid? When and how were they approached? Did this group include Bates's long-time pal and partner, fugitive hotelier Stanley Tollman, wanted in New York for fraud. It appears to have included two other veteran Bates associates, Ashraf Marwan and Stewart Thompson. Both Tollman and Thompson, who now lives in Florida, are former Chelsea directors. Thompson held 2.8m shares via a Guernsey company which accepted the bid. A year ago Marwan owned up to a 3.2% stake – 5.4m shares. But no holding of this size accepted the bid!

Were the offshore magic circle not therefore part of an undisclosed "concert party" of insiders? Is it any surprise if so many were approached that the Chelsea price rose from 19.5p on June 2 to 30.5p on June 30 – a movement also under investigation by the FSA. Why were other shareholders, some of whom presumably sold in June and so missed out on the bid, not told of the approach from Abramovich? Why did brokers Seymour Pierce, advising Bates, not insist on an announcement and a suspension of dealings, especially once the price began to move? What dealings if any in Chelsea shares have been traced to Seymour Pierce or contacts of those in the magic circle? These are hopefully questions the FSA is pursuing. So in the spirit of helping the police with their inquiries here is how the FSA came to be "concerned that...the market may have been misled as to the true ownership of Chelsea Village".

The story begins in Hong Kong two years before Bates acquired the Chelsea club. In December 1980 the Cecil Lee trust was created as a wholly discretionary trust by Rysaffe, a trust company, with links to London accountants Saffery Champness. Rysaffe is a simple anagram of Saffery. Just who was Cecil Lee has never been clear. But the assumption is that he was a local, possibly elderly Chinese given $1,000 to settle this and several other trusts and then walk away leaving the trust on the shelf waiting for Rysaffe to have a future client with an urgent offshore discretionary trust requirement.

Dead Chinese make great settlors. They can tell no tales. And a wholly discretionary trust means that the real beneficiaries can hide behind the trustees who receive instructions via an undisclosed letter of wishes provided not by the settlor but by the real power behind the trust who will probably be represented by an unseen protector who controls the trustees. But as the trust is discretionary and the trustees exercise that

"Best hurry, lad. There's trouble at t'call centre"

discretion anyone else when asked can legally say they are not a beneficiary. Because they are not. They only are if the trustees make them one. And that is not their decision. Well at least in public. Perhaps the FSA should try to speak to Mr Lee.

In April 1982 Bates acquired the financially strapped Chelsea through a British Virgin Islands company, Mayflower Securities. Within months Tollman became a Chelsea director. He and Bates had been in the hotel and travel business for several years and had shared a Monte Carlo address.

By 1992 Bates was caught up in a battle for control of Chelsea's Stamford Bridge ground with Irish developer John Duggan of Cabra Estates. In January 1992 Duggan claimed Bates was in the Far East looking for money. On February 21 the company we now know as CV issued 98 of its 100 shares to Mayflower (59) and RHK Nominees (39), a Hong Kong company later identified as acting as a nominee for Rysaffe and the Cecil Lee trust.

A month later, facing possible eviction from Stamford Bridge, Bates tried to depose Duggan by buying a 27% stake in Cabra from Ashraf Marwan for £3m. The shares were bought by another BVI company, Vanbrugh. However, Bates was variously identified as being behind, owning or being a shareholder in Vanbrugh, and Marwan said he was the buyer. The FSA might consider this previously overlooked fact highly significant in unravelling the Chelsea mystery.

In October 1992 Vanbrugh transferred its shares in Cabra to CV. A month later these became worthless when Cabra collapsed. In December 1992 Vanbrugh acquired 15 new shares in CV for £79,000. It gave Saffery Champness's address in Guernsey – home also to a Vanbrugh director, accountant Patrick Murrin. Murrin acted for Bates and Tollman.

In June 1993 CV put the old Chelsea soccer club into receivership. Marwan claimed £2.5m on a guarantee given to him by Bates and the club as part of the Cabra share deal.

In November 1993 almost 100m shares in CV, which now owned the new Chelsea FC, were issued to Bates's Mayflower Securities and to four companies described in 1996 as nominees for Rysaffe and the Cecil Lee trust. These were RHK Nominees and Hei See (both of Hong Kong), Atlantic Western Trustees of Jersey and Vanbrugh. In 1994 Marwan acquired 1.4m shares.

Two years later CV was floated at 55p with 70m shares held on behalf of the Cecil Lee trust as nominees for Rysaffe by Hei See (30.3m), RHK (24.25m), Atlantic and Vanbrugh – 9.1m shares. Saffery Champness International Management (director P Murrin) advised the four companies on voting their shares and acted as the effective trustee for Rysaffe. Three months after the flotation Marwan was allotted a further 1.8m shares at 55p, well below the market price.

CV shares rose sharply to over 120p. The mysterious offshore shareholders behind Rysaffe and the Hong Kong trust were soon selling. One deal to Bates's arch-rival Matthew Harding netted £4.4m. Vanbrugh in particular was a steady seller and by the end of 1996 held no shares. Another 10m were sold by RHK.

In December 1996 Rysaffe transferred the Lee trust's remaining 51m shares from the now three nominees companies to a new nominee, Swan Management, a Guernsey company run by Murrin following his departure from Saffery Champness. Two months later Rysaffe ceased to be the Lee trustee. It was replaced by Murrin and Harbour Trustees of which he was a director. "For the avoidance of doubt" it was declared that Bates had "no interest" in the Lee trust holding. No mention was made of Vanbrugh presumably because it now held no shares if previously part of the trust owned stake.

Swan Management realised a further possible £10m when it sold 6m shares to Murdoch's BSkyB in 2000 leaving it with 44.5m shares or 26% of CV. In June last year it too left the Chelsea picture selling 20m shares to Mayflower at 18p or £3.6m – a year later Bates doubled his money thanks to Abramovich. Bates could not have bought any more shares without triggering a full bid as he would have breached the 30% level.

Instead the remaining 24.5m shares found their way to five companies all in different tax havens – the BVI, Cook Islands, Samoa, Mauritius and Cyprus. But they all shared the same address in Guernsey – that of Patrick Murrin's Harbour

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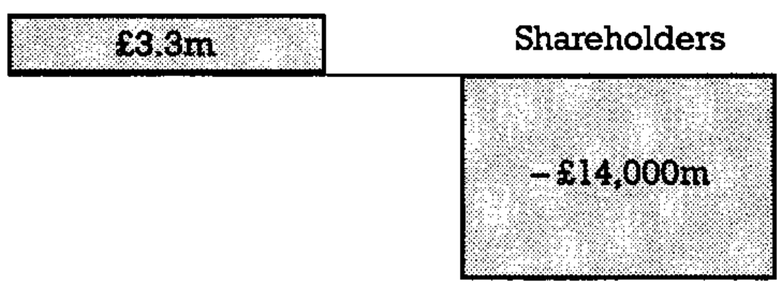
IF WE SACK THE OLD FOOL IT'LL COST US FOUR MILLION!
CONTRACT
146.

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Winners and losers at Prudential

Under Jonathan Bloomer, chief executive since March 2000



group. And conveniently as no holding was more than 3% their identity did not need to be publicly disclosed although the information was available on the CV share register. Was Marwan a buyer? If not, were the shares still owned by the Lee trust? It is not clear. If so why were they split up five ways? But then the Lee trust stake had initially been split four ways in different havens. If the Lee trust did sell then the beneficiaries should be mighty unhappy. For assuming they sold at the same 18p paid by Bates then they lost over £4m when Abramovich bid a year later.

Another seller to Abramovich was Havering, a Guernsey company which bought 7.5m shares at 60p each back in 1996 after acquiring an option from Bates for £375,000. Whoever is behind Havering – Marwan is suggested but this 4.4% stake exceeds his declared holding– lost half its near £5m investment.

The supposedly former Lee trust block was brought together again by Bates when he and they all agreed as one to accept the Abramovich bid. Why did none of the offshore holders object or want more? Why was Murrin representing all five holders as he had represented the sellers, the Lee trust, if they were not the same parties? Why were the shares not simply sold in the market to various buyers instead of placed with five Murrin-run companies if the buyers were really unconnected?

CV and Bates have alternately either denied that they knew the identity of their major shareholders or that they did and were not saying. CV never issued a Section 212 notice to demand disclosure of the beneficial ownership of the Lee trust shares. Presumably because it already knew.

A former Chelsea director claims Bates told him the Swan Management trustees "will vote the way I say" and that " it would all come to me". No doubt this was untrue. The trust was described in Bates's autobiography as being run by "friends of Bates". Bates has also described them as his original 1982 backers. Good reasons for suspecting Tollman's involvement.

Bates clearly knows who bought shares in his company from 1993 onwards. He knows about Vanbrugh. He knows Murrin. He knows who he sold the Havering shares to in 1996. He knows who he bought the 20m Swan Management shares from last year. He and Murrin knew where to find the crucial shares to make the Abramovich bid happen and prevent Chelsea possibly sliding into a financial crisis like the ones that first gave him control of the club in 1982 for £1 and to switch it to CV 10 years later.

Bates will no doubt have to talk to the FSA "worms". He says the whole offshore issue was examined by the regulators at the time of the Swan sale. Tollman, holed up in his Belgravia penthouse, may also be seen. So too will Murrin, already under investigation by the Guernsey regulators following pressure from the US authorities chasing Tollman's assets. Marwan – depends if he is in Egypt.

So the answer to the Chelsea mystery may finally emerge. But to some it is no mystery. If it looks, sounds and smells like an elephant then it is an elephant.

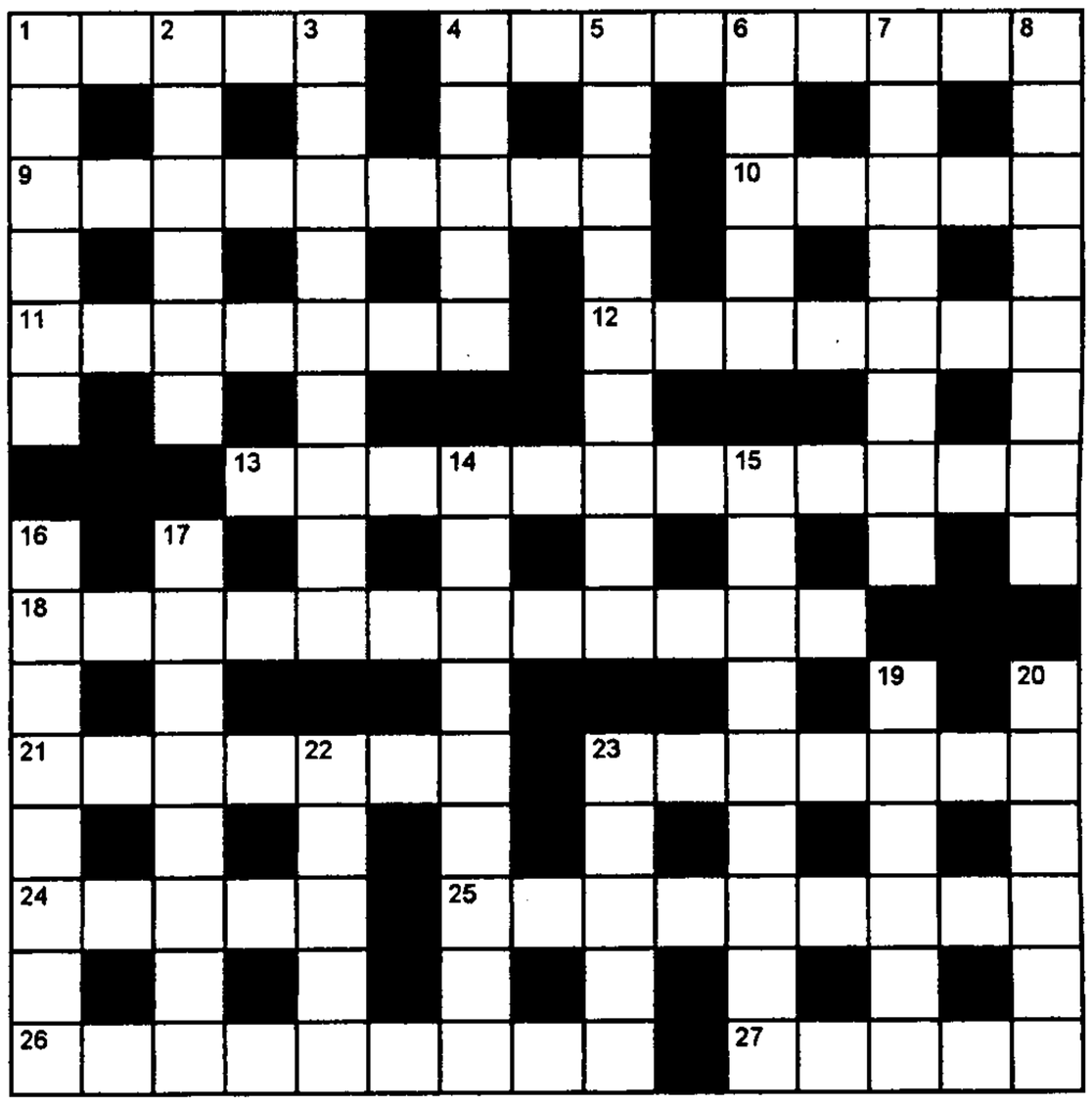
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 241

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 15 August 2003.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Bush-like, feeling good about Pen (5)
4 Joining in giving two-fingered salute to Bush's no. 2 getting cosy with President (7,2)
9 Doddery Reagan, accepting Thatcher's lead in presenting an enemy of that period (9)
10 Some tosser whose output is frozen? (5)
11 The part-time Scotsman's mug getting excitable Victoria scarpering (7)
12 Western women, flipping disinclined to curse (4,3)
13 Re-mastered Beachboys LP including Beatle's intro – shrink-wrapped drivel? (12)
18 Archer's thing? Yes, with or without dash (12)
21 Trendy TV series: *Having it off with a Sloth* (7)
23 Jack given the push (tried to knock off a knight) (7)
24 Kick ass and Ginger 'Ego-trip' Evans starts having an erection (3,2)
25 Municipal mouthpiece in row about Crown corruption (4-5)
26 60% of Giscard d'Estaing's new scheme is put to shame (9)
27 Tackle, given one's primitive impulses, gets really stiff (5)

DOWN

1 Penny leads topless country dance (6)
2 Israeli leader meets Saudi's leader – goes back to square one (6)
3 Agreement for count of prison population, it's reported (9)
4 Cyclops is gobbled by Hollywood star – disgusting! (5)
5 Focus of Doris Day's G-spot pointlessly moved and said to be introduced 'down under' (4,5)
6 Prime minister right put out by her country (5)
7 US would-be persuaders of the continuing need for persuaders (3,5)
8 Freed from guilt, start to piss off Freud (twice interrupted by one) (8)
14 Like coming to see a/c limit breached (twice caught without) (9)
15 Who says the trains are running late? Widdecombe, the cat? Right! (9)
16 "In the sack, circling the raised bit endlessly ..." – Cut! (8)
17 (8) (Geddit?)
19 Caring pop star hugging Rex – might get balled? (6)
20 Idolised party leftie after Clare's heart (6)
22 Drunk, got up to put away balls again (5)
23 Yes, in Munich United was all mouth (5)

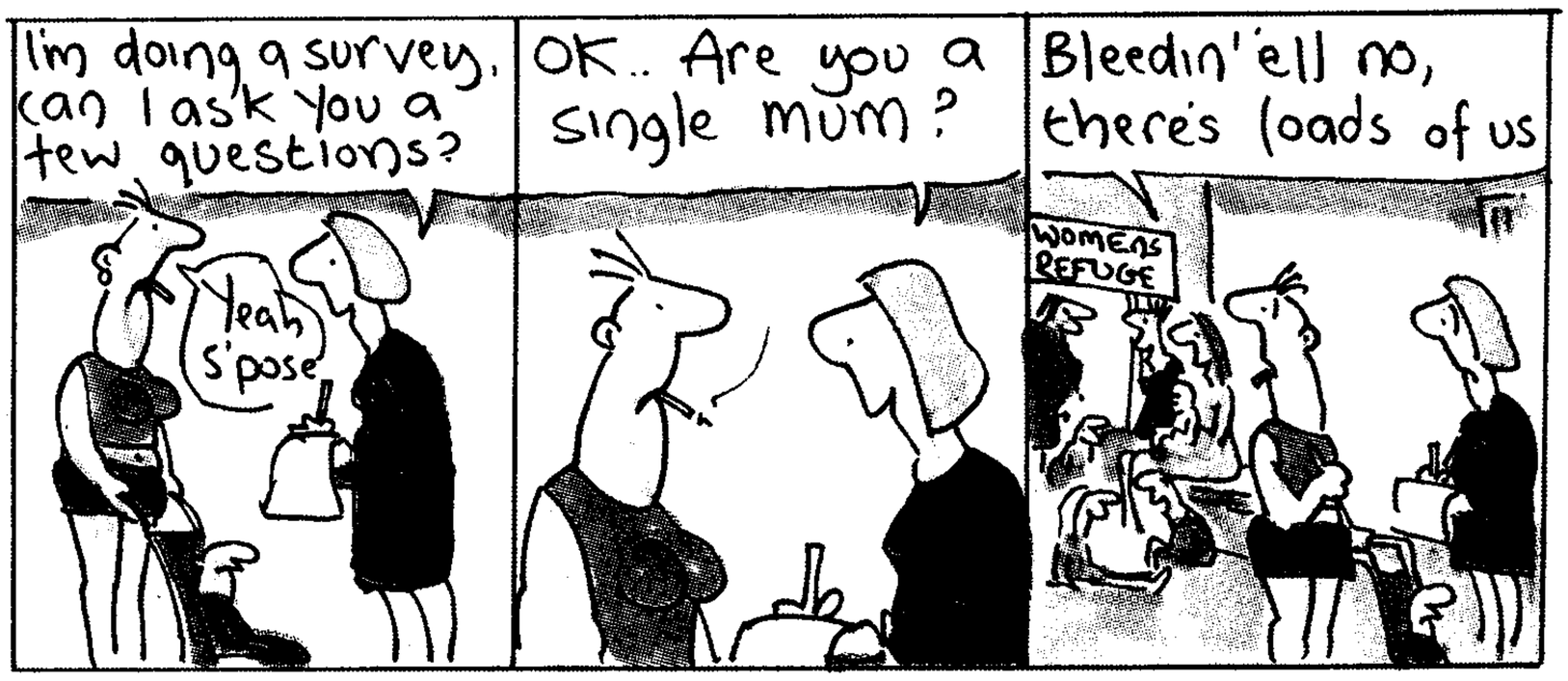
Crossword 240 winner: TOM DONNELLY

ACROSS: 1 Bucks 4 Come clean 9 Camilla 10 Reunify 11 Loopy 12 Knickered 13/15A/17/21 Spend more time with one's family 19 Nappy 22 Accidents 24 Aesop 25 Instant 26 Go to pot 27 Yesterday 28 Aitch.

DOWN: 1 Backlash 2 Commode 3 Splay 4 Crack 5 Mardi Gras 6 Chuck it in 7 Epigram 8 Noyade 14 Dehydrate 15 Man United 16 Eye-patch 18 Incises 20 Pisspot 23 Saggy 24 Astra.

YOBS

HUSBAND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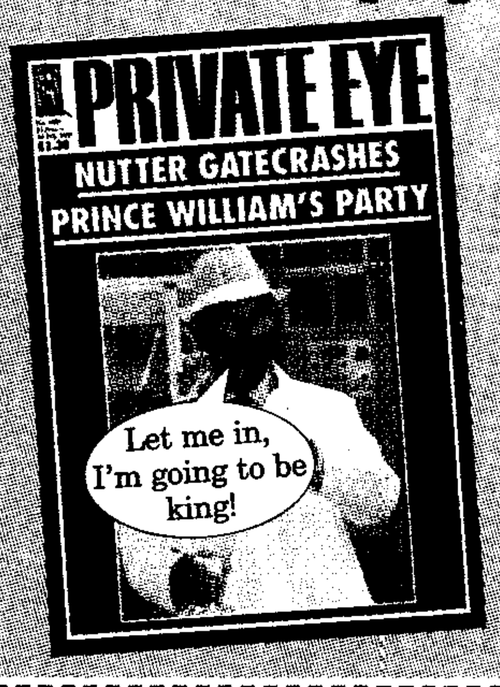

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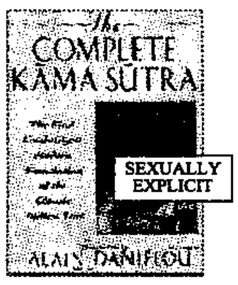

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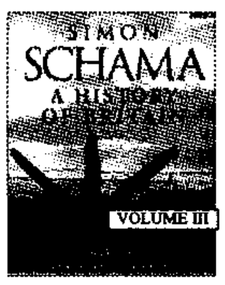

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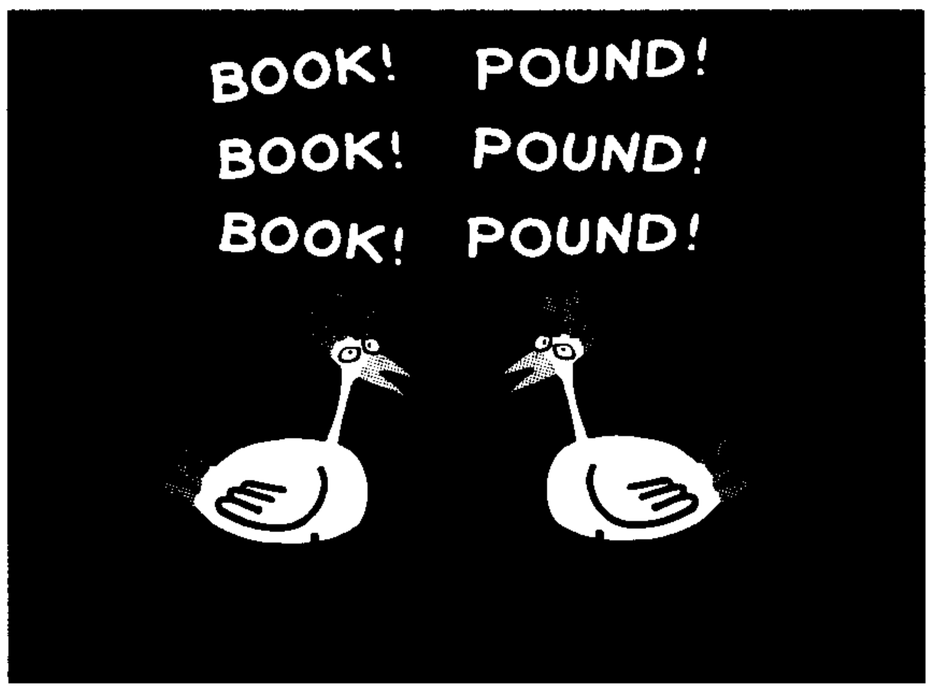

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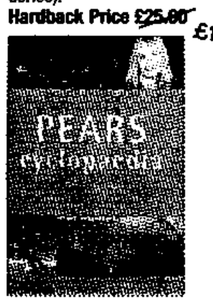

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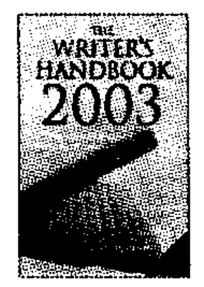

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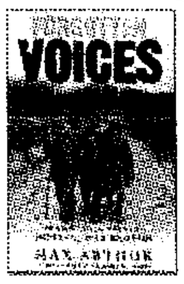

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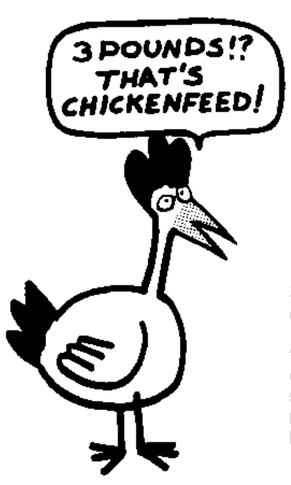

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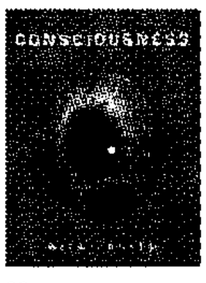

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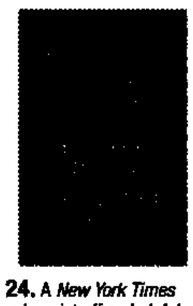

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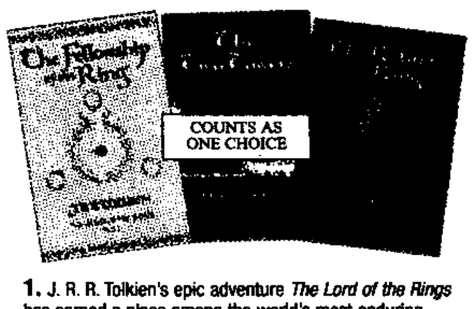

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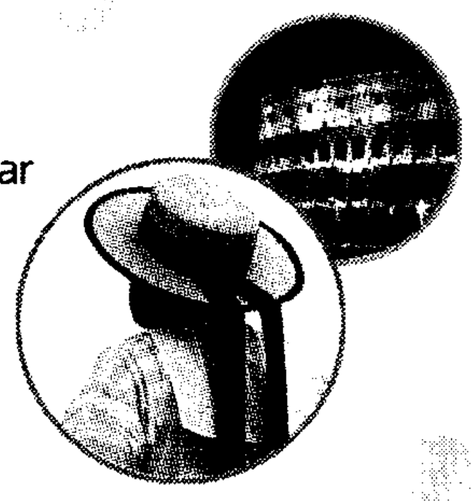

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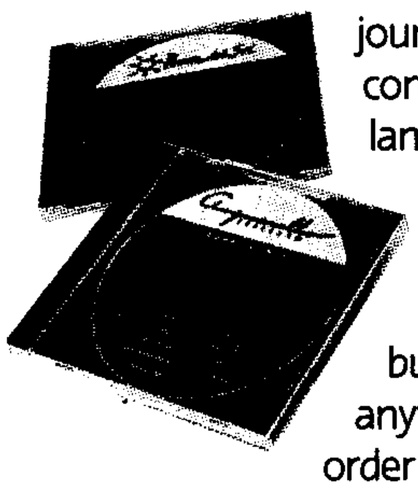

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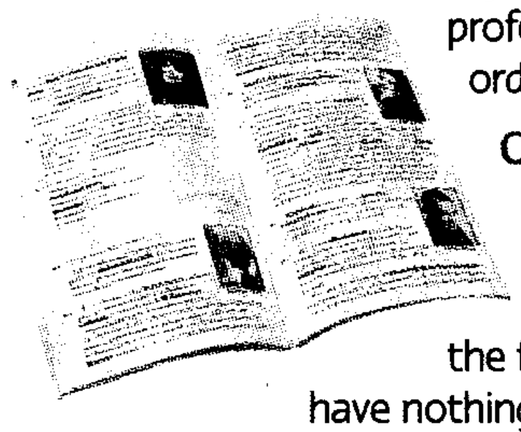

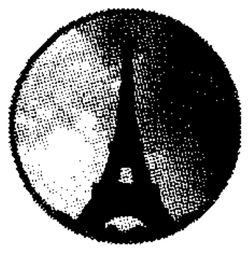

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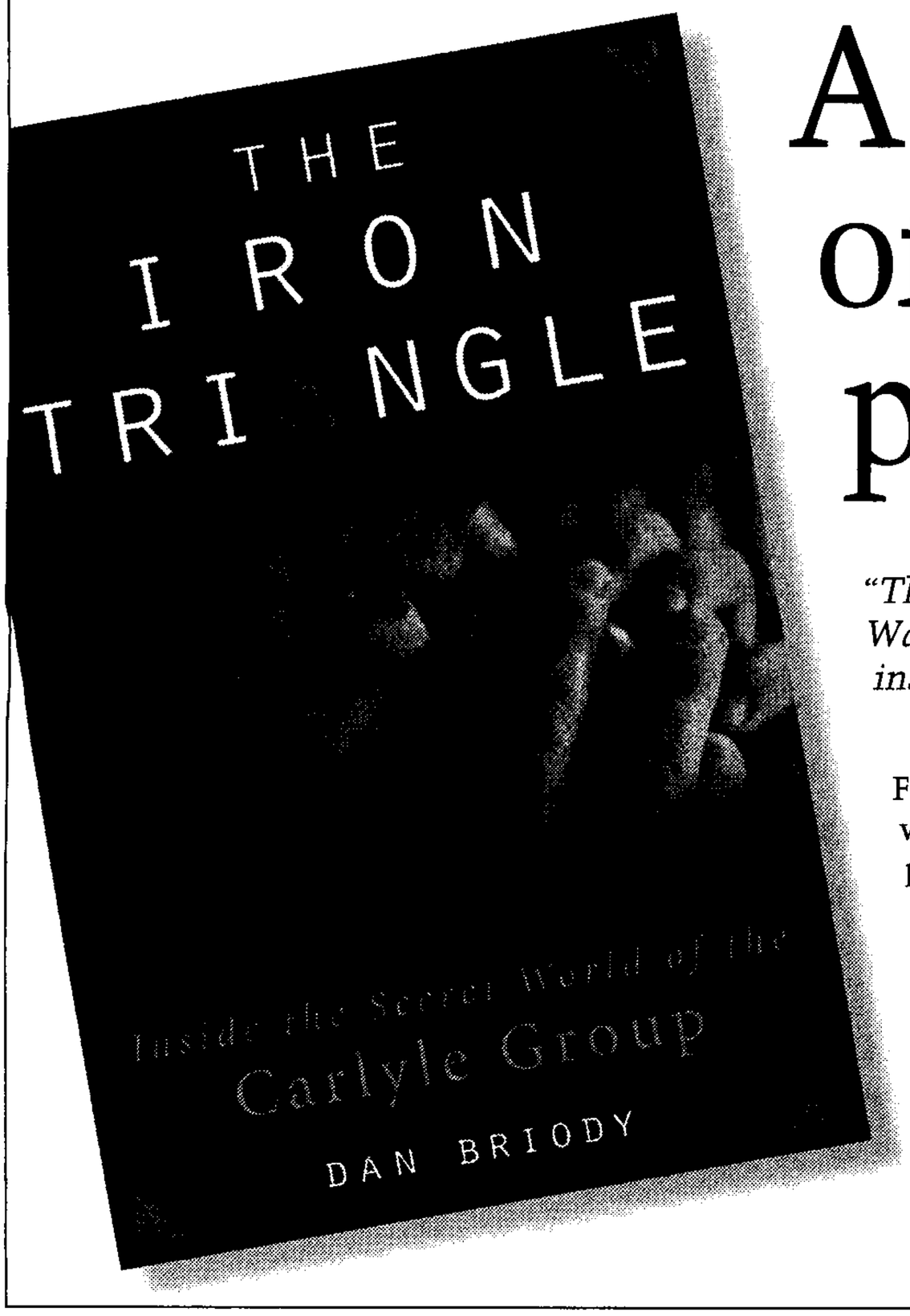

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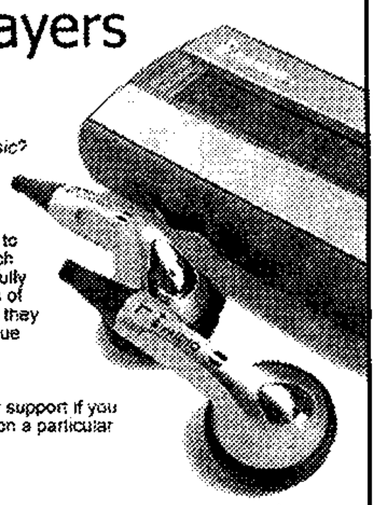

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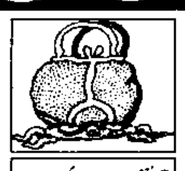
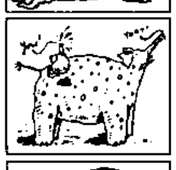


A selection of cartoons, illustrations and animated cels can be found on the **Cartoon Gallery Website**, from **Chris Riddell** to **Steve Bell, Alex** to **Appleby, Honeysett** to **Husband** and **McLachlan** to **Matt.**



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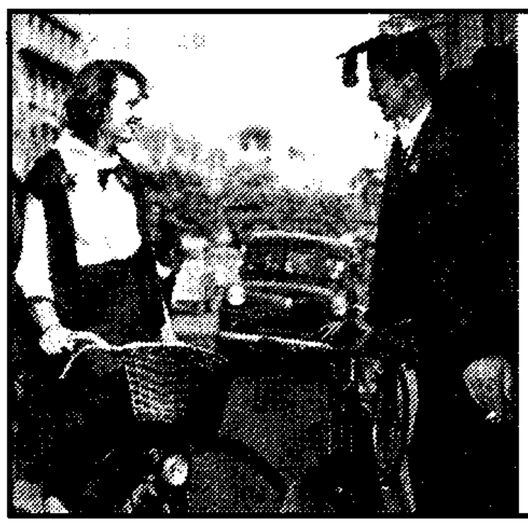

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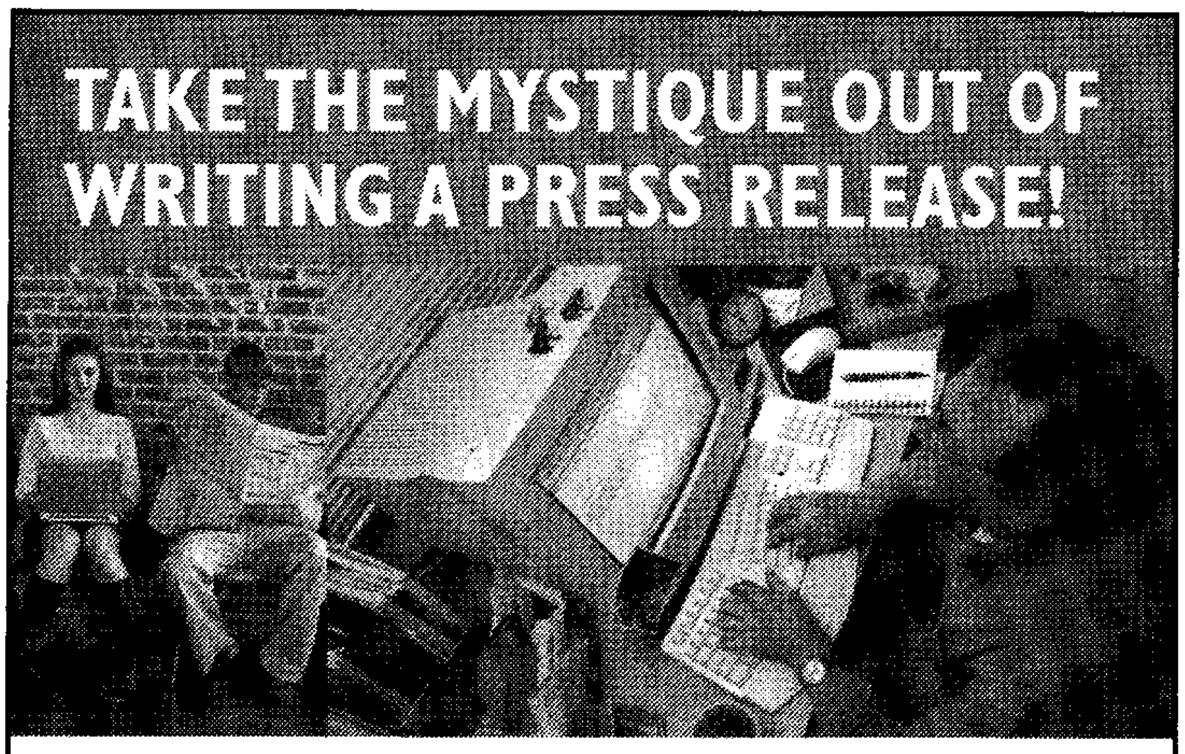

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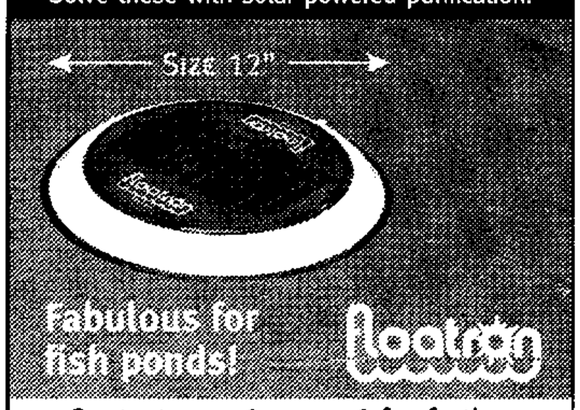

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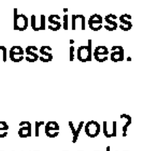

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PENNILESS LOVERS desperate to elope and begin life together. All help gratefully accepted. HSBC 40-26-08 91300164. Thank you.

DESTITUTE PHILOSOPHY postgrad urgently needs funds to complete innovative doctoral thesis. Co-operative Bank 08-93-00 05068416.

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TALENTED BUT POOR female medical student desperately needs funds to continue studies. Abbey National 09-01-26 34233325. Sponsor? Medic_4@hotmail.com

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INVESTOR/PARTNER wanted to buy property for established language school/virtual office in the Czech Republic. www.virtual-office.cz

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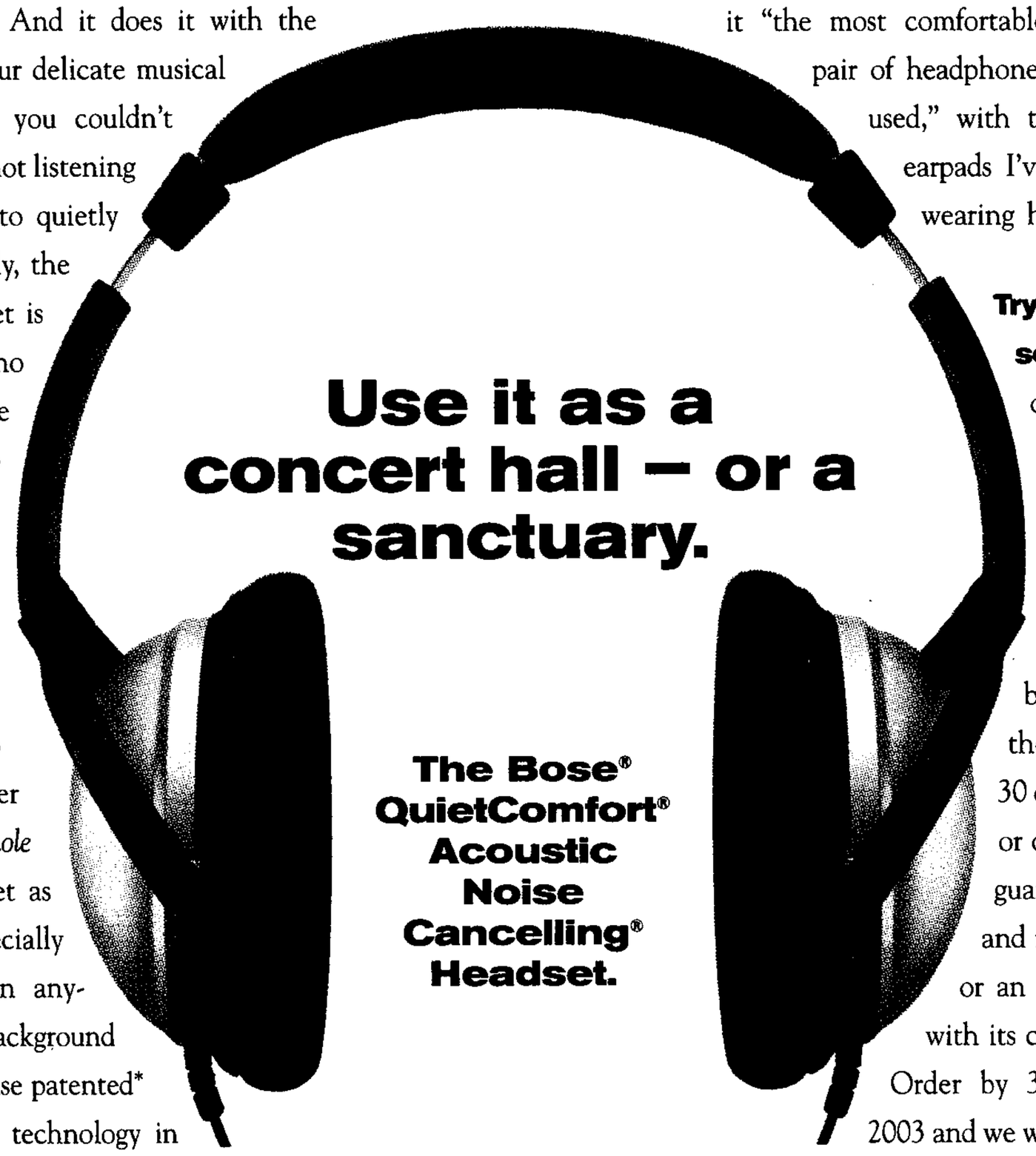

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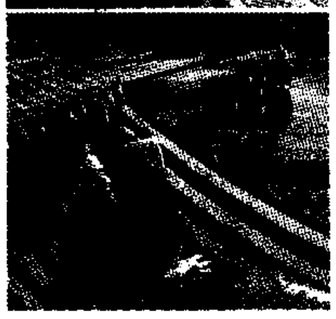

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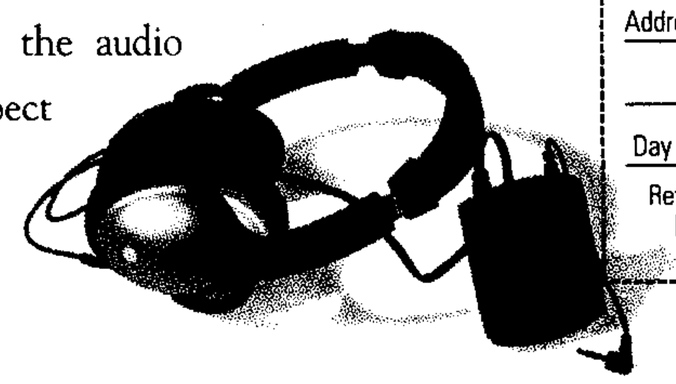

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